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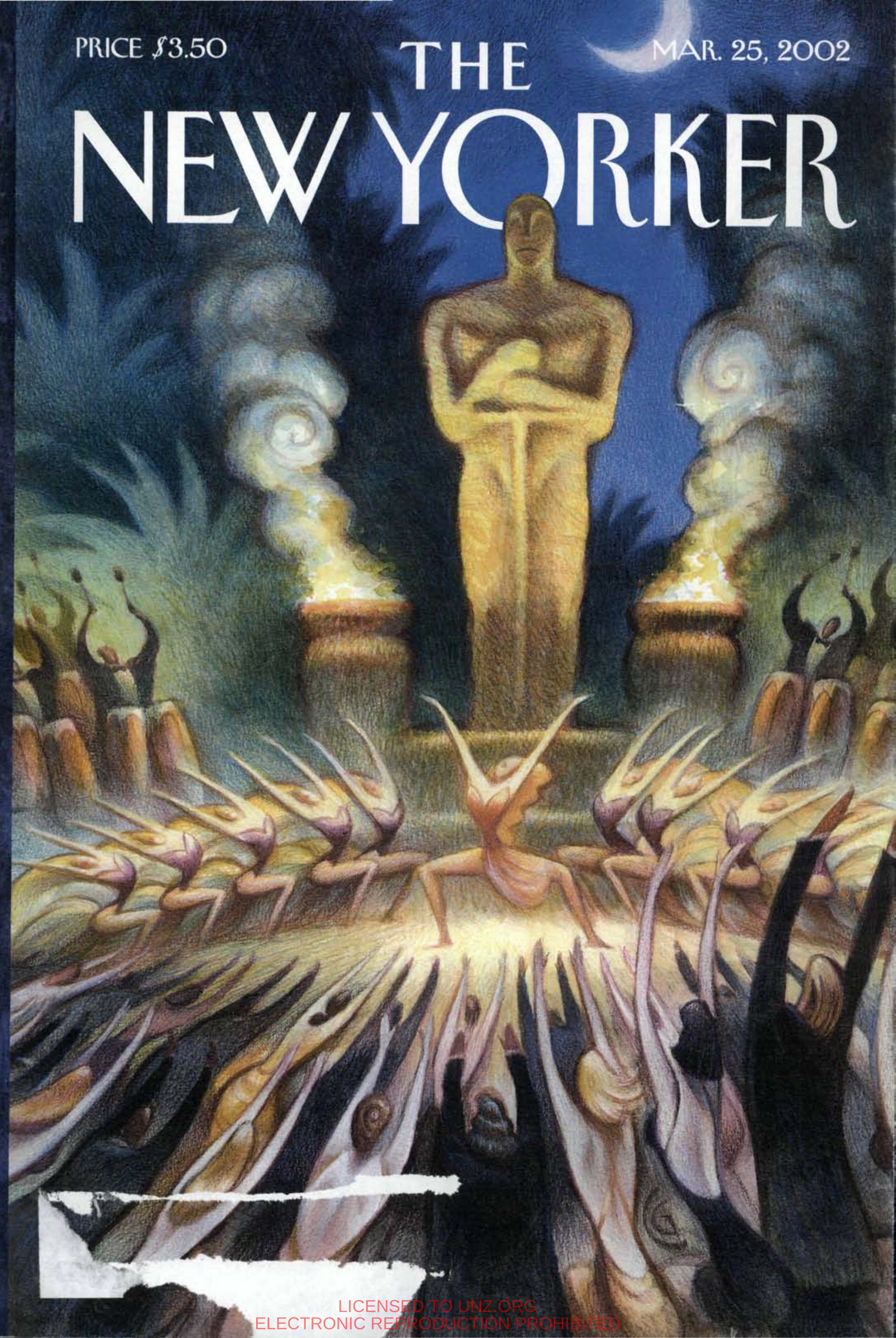

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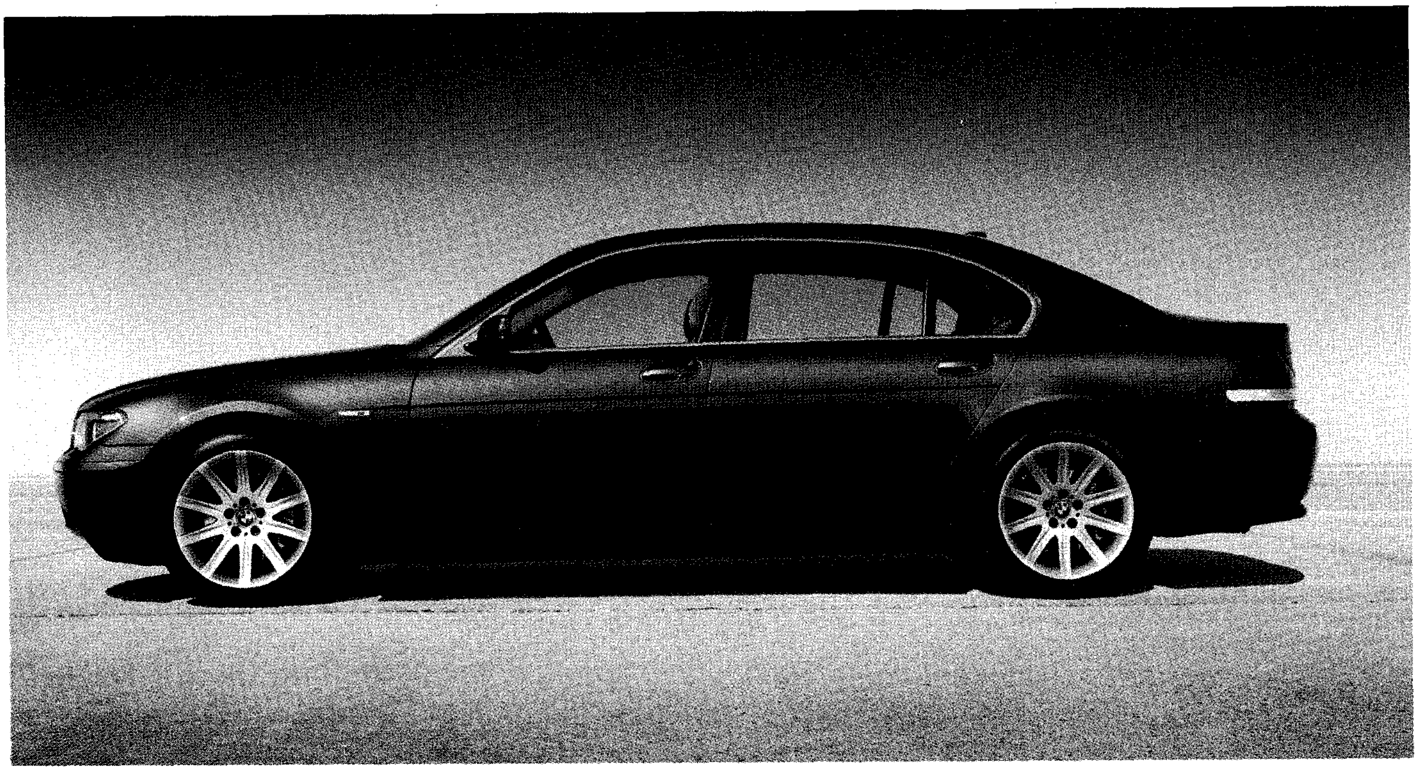

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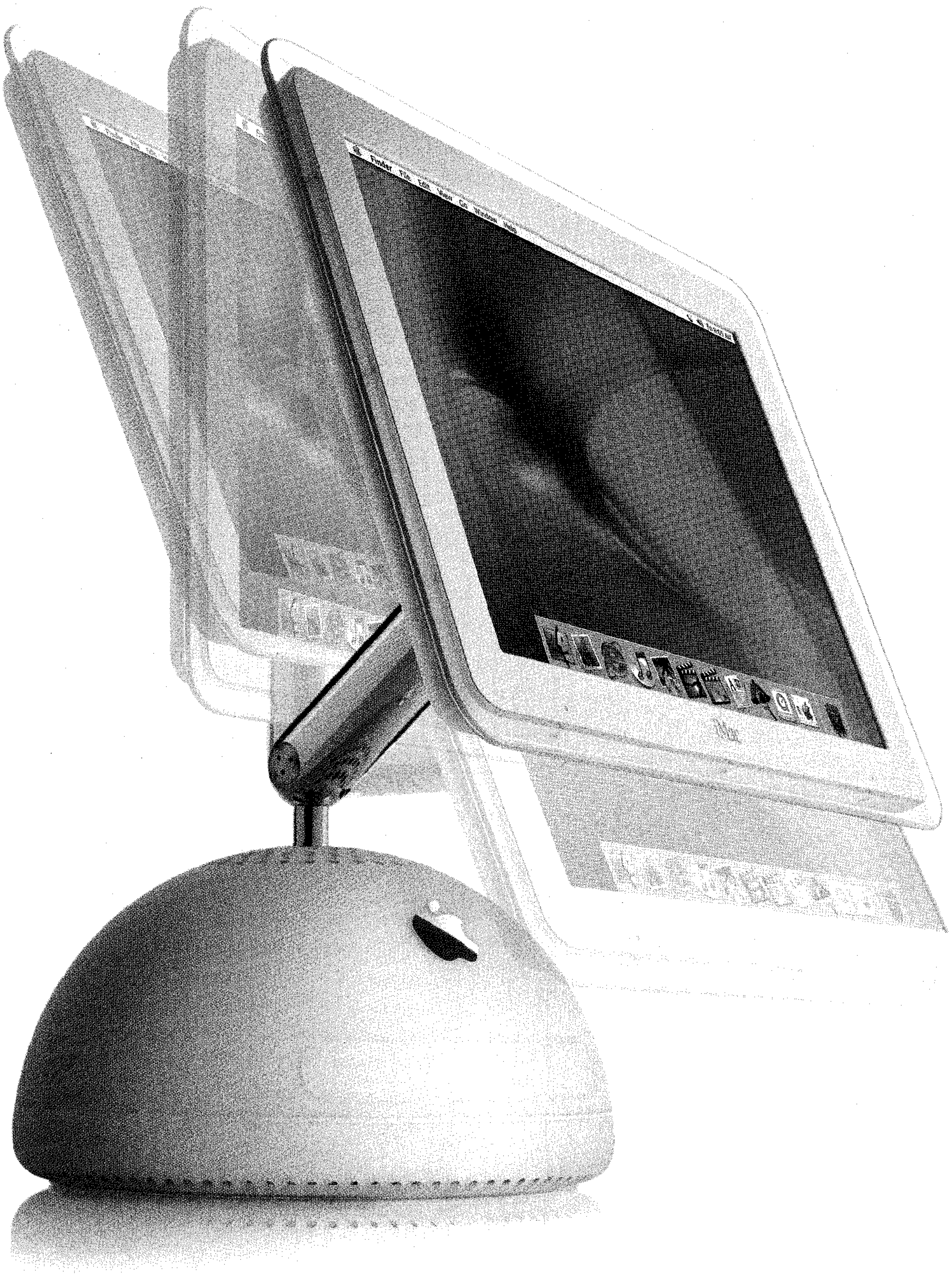
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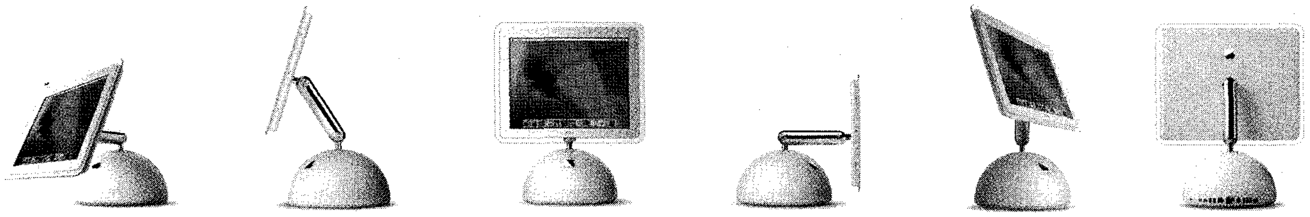

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THE NEW YORKER

MARCH 25, 2002

10 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN
37 THE TALK OF THE TOWN
The Oscar ticket; fury in Brooklyn.

Mark Singer 44 U.S. JOURNAL
The High Mark
The mad snowmobilers of Montana.

Paul Rudnick 51 SHOUTS & MURMURS
All Apologies

Jeffrey Goldberg 52 A REPORTER AT LARGE
The Great Terror
In Kurdistan, a land devastated by Saddam Hussein's chemical attacks, is there evidence of his ties to Osama bin Laden?

E. L. Doctorow 76 FICTION
"Baby Wilson"

THE CRITICS

Anthony Lane 86 A CRITIC AT LARGE
"E.T." at twenty.

BOOKS
Malcolm Gladwell 92 *The case for messy desks.*
97 Briefly Noted

Peter Schjeldahl 98 THE ART WORLD
The Whitney Biennial.

Paul Goldberger 100 THE SKY LINE
New stores for Prada and Toys R Us.

John Lahr 102 THE THEATRE
"Sweet Smell of Success," "Mr. Goldwyn."

POEMS

Kevin Young 62 "Intermezzo"
Linda Gregg 82 "Beauty"

COVER *"The Natives Are Getting Restless," by Carter Goodrich* THE BACK PAGE *"Duchamp Is Our Misfortune," by Art Spiegelman* DRAWINGS *Robert Mankoff, Jack Ziegler, Mike Twohy, Alex Gregory, Roz Chast, Donald Reilly, Tom Cheney, Bruce Eric Kaplan, David Sipress, Dana Fradon, William Haefeli, Leo Cullum, P. C. Vey, William Hamilton, Mick Stevens, Barbara Smaller, C. Covert Darbyshire*

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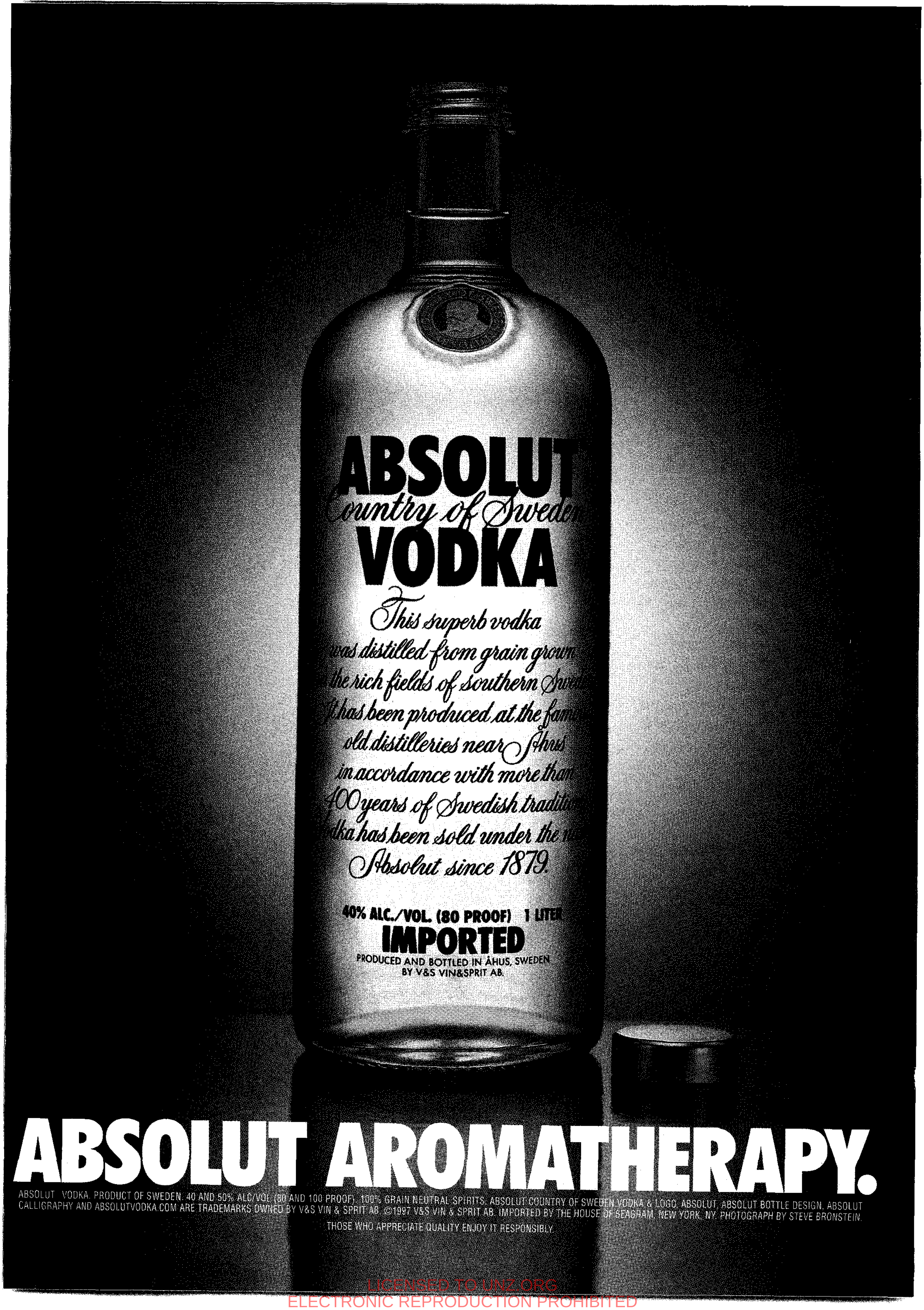
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CONTRIBUTORS

Jeffrey Goldberg ("The Great Terror," p. 52), a staff writer, is working on a book about the Middle East.

Mark Singer ("The High Mark," p. 44) has published three books: "Funny Money," "Mr. Personality," and "Citizen K."

Paul Rudnick (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 51) is a novelist and playwright. He is working on a new play called "Valhalla."

Nick Paumgarten (The Talk of the Town, p. 39) is an editor at the magazine.

Kevin Young (Poem, p. 62) is the Ruth Lilly Professor of Poetry at Indiana University. His third book of poems, "Jelly Roll," will be published next year.

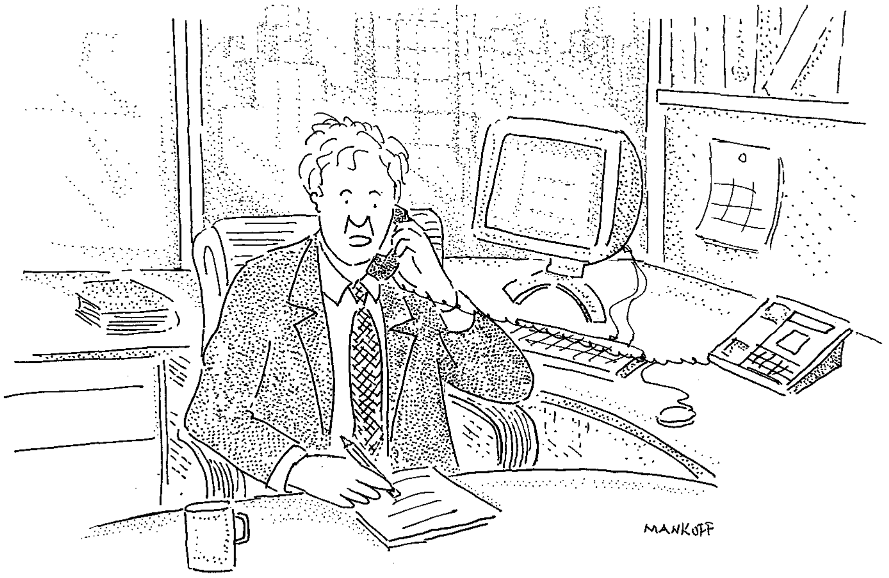
E. L. Doctorow (Fiction, p. 76) has published ten novels, including "Billy Bathgate," "The Waterworks," and "City of God."

Malcolm Gladwell (Books, p. 92) is the author of "The Tipping Point."

Istvan Banyai (Illustration, p. 87) published "Minus Equals Plus," a collection of his work as an illustrator, last year.

Linda Gregg (Poem, p. 82) has written five books of poetry, including "Alma" and "Things and Flesh."

Art Spiegelman (The Back Page, p. 104) is creating a series of autobiographical comics broadsheets, "In the Shadow of No Towers," for the German weekly *Die Zeit*. ♦



"I've got a lot on my plate right now. For starters, I need to sharpen my pencil, refill my coffee, and get a new comb."

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THE MAIL

GIVING TO THE RICH

Is the American Red Cross so completely lacking in imagination and creativity that it can think of no better way to spend the World Trade Center relief fund than by giving large sums to rich people in luxury apartments (The Talk of the Town, by Nick Paumgarten, February 18th & 25th)? We all understand that the Red Cross has been pressured both to cut the red tape and to spend all the money on victims of the terrorist attacks. But must the money be spent immediately? The attacks were only six months ago. Isn't it conceivable that children who lost their parents might need support in the future? Or that recovery workers (who are still on the job) might need trauma counselling someday?

Jennifer McClinton-Temple
Kingston, Pa.

A Red Cross spokesperson told Paumgarten, "If people take our money and they don't need it, well, shame on them." I chose to donate to the Red Cross because I believed that an organization with decades of experience in disaster relief would already have safeguards in place to guarantee that the public's money did not go to people who had no claim to it. The Red Cross can't blame abuse solely on those wanting a piece of the pie, or on the size of the fund. The onus to distribute the money fairly is on the Red Cross, as is the shame for making it so easy for charlatans to bilk donors.

Kathy Kovacic
Shaker Heights, Ohio

HUCK AND JIM

Hilton Als, in his review of Randall Kennedy's book "Nigger," refers to the runaway slave in Mark Twain's "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" as "Nigger Jim" (A Critic at Large, February 11th). But while Huck, the narrator, uses the N-word more than two hundred times, he never calls his companion "Nigger Jim," and neither does anyone else in the book. The practice of referring to him this way was popularized by Ernest Hemingway in "Green Hills of Africa," and then perpetuated by critics. Als also attributes Huck's attitudes toward blacks to the fact that "Pap's point of view, his voice, is all that Huck has ever known." Although in other respects Huck's abusive, uncouth father differs markedly from the respectable people in the novel, such as Judge Thatcher and the Widow Douglas, his racist ideas and his support for slavery are consistent with theirs. Miss Watson, the Widow's sister, owns slaves—unlike the poor white Pap—and Jim runs away after hearing her talking about selling him down the river. In fact, it is only because of the gaps in Huck's (mis)education that he comes to see Jim's humanity and expresses his willingness to forfeit his soul to free him.

John Gruesser
Professor of English, Kean University
Union, N.J.

DIGGING IN MANHATTAN

Adam Gopnik was an engaging companion on our walk together exploring the archeological sites of lower Manhattan ("Underfoot," February 4th). But a few points may have got muddled along the way. Gopnik gives one of us, Anne-Marie Cantwell, credit for a study of the evolution of home life in early New York and for the excavation of the Telco site. In fact, both projects are Diana Wall's work. In addition, we did not intend to disparage all contract archeologists. Wall made her living as a contract archeologist for years, and our book, "Unearthing Gotham," is based on some excellent contract studies.

Anne-Marie Cantwell
Diana Wall
New York City

•

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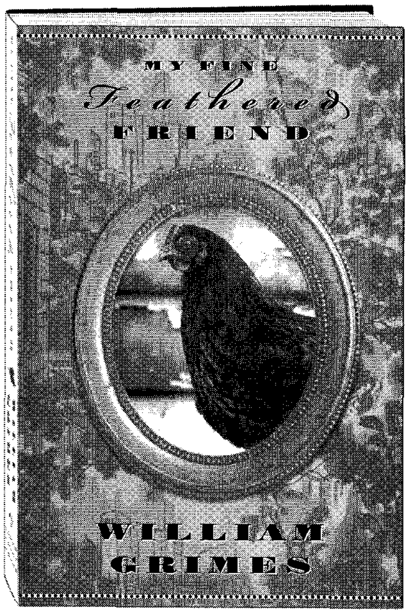

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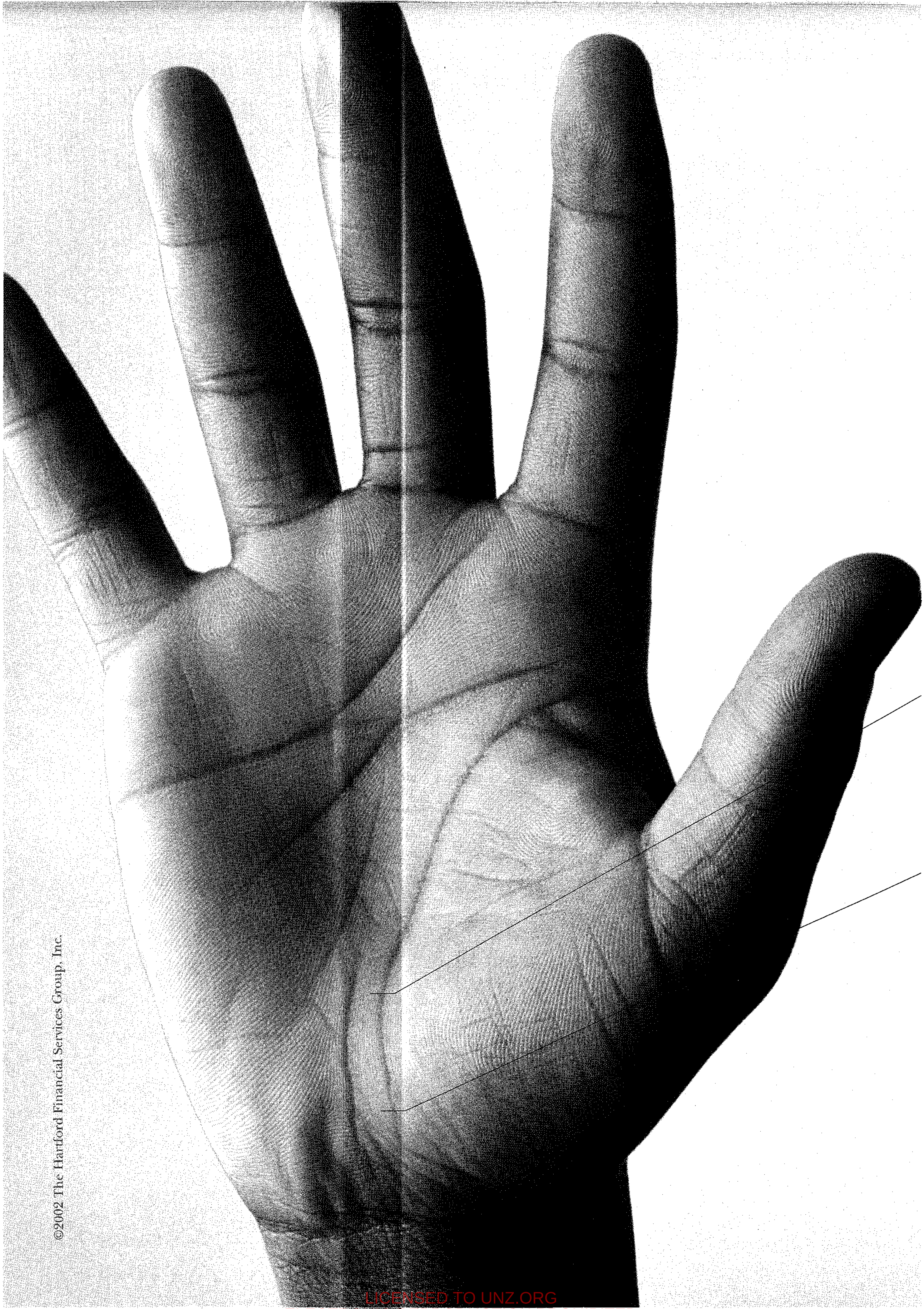

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THE CARPETBAGGER'S CHILDREN
Jean Stapleton, Hallie Foote, and Roberta Maxwell portray three daughters of a Union soldier, in a new play by Horton Foote. Michael Wilson is the director. In previews through March 24. Opens March 25 at 6:45. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

FORTUNE'S FOOL
Turgenev's comedy, starring Alan Bates and Frank Langella. Arthur Penn is the director. In previews. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

FRANNY'S WAY
In Richard Nelson's latest play, staged by Playwrights Horizons, the lives of two teen-age sisters are transformed by a trip to Greenwich Village in 1957. In previews through March 24. Opens March 26 at 7. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 279-4200.)

THE GRADUATE
From London's West End, Terry Johnson's adaptation of the 1967 film, starring Kathleen Turner, Jason Biggs, and Alicia Silverstone. Mr. Johnson is the director. In previews. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

HELEN
Tony Kushner directs Ellen McLaughlin's modern interpretation of the plight of Helen of Troy. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

NO TIME FOR COMEDY
S. N. Behrman's 1939 play, about a playwright torn between the demands of his actress wife and his mistress. In previews through March 24. Opens March 25 at 7. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 315-0231.)

OKLAHOMA!
Trevor Nunn's West End production of the 1943 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical comes to Broadway. In previews. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

SMELL OF THE KILL
Michele Lowe's comedy involves three wives, their three unloving husbands, and a meat locker. Christopher Ashley is the director. In previews through March 24. Opens March 26 at 7. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

SWIMMING WITH WATERMELONS
An American G.I. and a young Japanese woman fall in love in occupied Japan, in a play with music created by Diane Paulus, Randy Weiner, and Project 400. In previews. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 353-0303.)

36 VIEWS
Naomi Iizuka's drama about the discovery of a priceless Japanese pillow book and its effects on the academic art community. Directed by Mark Wing-Davey. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

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TOPDOG/UNDERDOG
The Public Theatre's production of Suzan-Lori Parks's play has moved to Broadway, starring Jeffrey Wright and Mos Def. George C. Wolfe is the director. In previews. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

THE UNDERPANTS
Carl Sternheim's 1910 comedy, newly adapted by Steve Martin. Barry Edelstein is the director. In previews. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AN ALMOST HOLY PICTURE
In Heather McDonald's limpid, well-written monologue, a meditation on the nature of faith, Samuel Gentle (the appealing Kevin Bacon), a lapsed priest turned groundskeeper, plants his patch and dutifully tries to live in a sacramental way for a God who seems, if not dead, at least comatose. The kinds of questions that McDonald's play raises can't be found on CNN, which is the evening's asset. But the play's incidents are narrated, not dramatized, and that is its limitation. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/18 & 25/02.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300. Closes March 31.)

BEA ARTHUR ON BROADWAY: JUST BETWEEN FRIENDS
The stage and screen star performs songs and reminisces about her six-decade career, accompanied by the pianist Billy Goldenberg. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

CALABI YAU
M.T.A. workers try to build a particle accelerator in abandoned subway tunnels, in a "string-theory comedy" written by Susanna Speier and starring James Urbaniak. March 22-24 at 7:30. Continues through April 7. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
Three actors perform thirty-seven plays and a hundred and fifty-four sonnets in under two hours. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

THE CRUCIBLE
A revival of Arthur Miller's 1953 drama, starring Liam Neeson and Laura Linney, under the direction of Richard Eyre. (3/18/02) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

THE DAZZLE
It's probably perfectly natural to worry that the sum of one's existence will end up being nothing more than an awful mess. In the true case of the infamous Collyer brothers, whose decaying bodies were discovered in 1947 buried beneath a lifetime collection of junk, that fear became a reality of phenomenal proportions. The terrific playwright Richard Greenberg has reimagined the brothers' fatal mistake (using love of the world's things, including knowledge, as a shield against the more painful love of humanity) with mixed results. His play is extremely long on longueurs (in the end, neurotics are actually pretty boring), but thanks to fine performances by the heretofore underrated Reg Rogers, as a concert pianist, and Peter Frechette, as his protective lawyer brother, it has numerous moments of funny-sad clarity. By adding to their history a woman (Francie Swift) who loved them both, Greenberg steers the audience toward renewed affection for the gift of existence rather than its trappings. David Warren is the director. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

ELAINE STRITCH AT LIBERTY
In her extraordinary one-woman show (co-created with *The New Yorker's* theatre critic John Lahr), Stritchie, as Noel Coward called her, once and for all confirms her status as a living legend. As she sings songs and tells tales about the ups and downs of her long life in the theatre, she ends up capturing more than a single lifetime; her show is the synthesis of so much that is rich and rewarding and heartbreaking about life on the stage. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

FOOL FOR LOVE
Tim Corcoran's precise, insightful direction is the heart of this revival of Sam Shepard's 1984 play about a misbegotten love. Mr. Corcoran is particularly good at choreographing the loaded silences and flashes of physical passion that run through one couple's evening-long explication of their history. Though there is unfortunately little chemistry between the two leads, the evening's power lies mainly in the monologues, and those are superb. (29th Street Rep, 212 W. 29th St. 206-1515. Closes March 30.)

FOUR
With its stark immediacy, the twenty-six-year-old Christopher Shinn's drama outshines many other new plays being produced today. The action is set on a single day—the Fourth of July in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1996—and follows the wanderings of four wounded but resilient characters, whose lives are intertwined in ways they don't know. The cast is wonderful; under Jeff Cohen's direction, they tap

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into the confusion and bravery of people taking tentative steps toward the kinds of human connections their circumstances have made them yearn for. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes March 31.)

FURTHER THAN THE FURTHEST THING
In Zinnie Harris's play, which is set partly on the real and remote South Atlantic island of Tristan da Cunha and partly in England in 1961, a volcanic eruption wrests all the islanders away from their world of black sand and penguins and plunges them into factory life and damp employee housing. But the play is not a romanticization of a paradise lost—there is a tragedy in the island's past, and it still lodges in the lives of an older couple (Robert Hogan and Jenny Sterlin) and the nephew they raised (Dan Futterman). In their relationship to the island and to their current circumstances, they are psychically caught between a rock and a hard place. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes March 31.)

THE GOAT; OR, WHO IS SYLVIA?
Bill Pullman and Mercedes Ruehl star in Edward Albee's new play, in which a celebrated architect must make a confession to his wife and son that will have ruinous effects. David Esbjornson is the director. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GODFADDA WORKOUT
A one-man show written and performed by Seth Isler. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

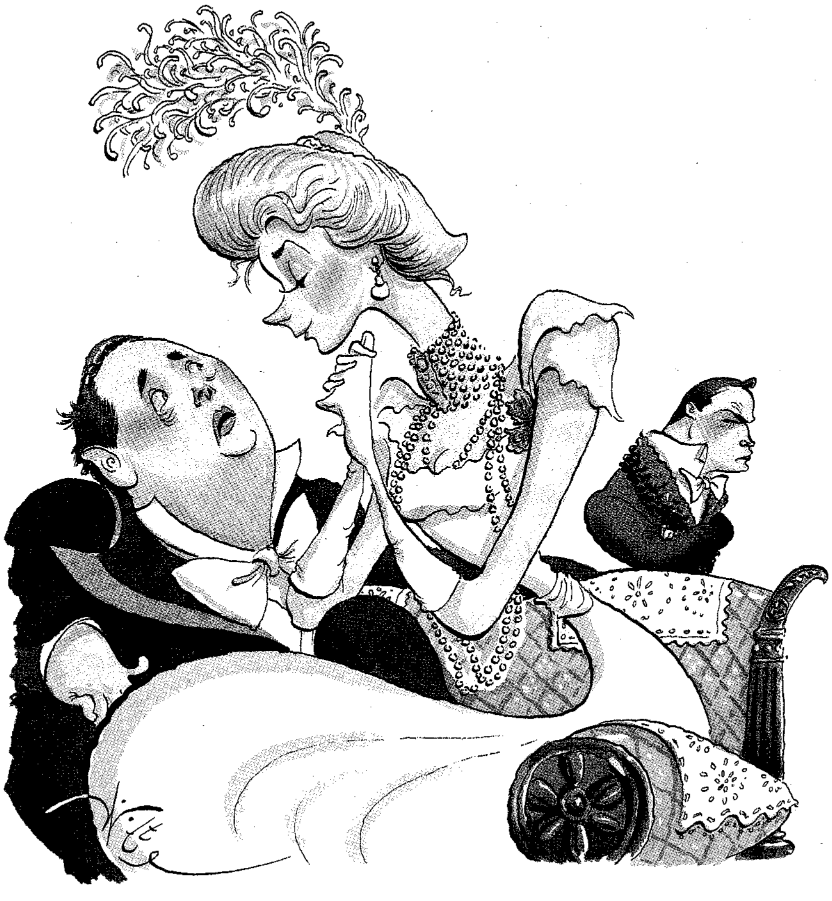
THE LAST FIVE YEARS
This new work by the composer Jason Robert Brown ("Parade") is not really a musical per se (it has no book to speak of); it's a song cycle of charming, often funny, but not terribly memorable tunes that trace the five-year relationship of a young New York City couple. As a cocky novelist who strikes it big with his first book and a struggling actress whose career has been relegated to the regionals, the super-talented Norbert Leo Butz and Sherie René Scott do everything in their admirable power to bring the characters into sharp focus. But Brown has made the pair less than three-dimensional and set them down in a show in which they rarely interact (a device that is probably meant to highlight their inherent isolation but which instead makes it seem like they've never met). On top of it all, the audience knows from the outset that the couple is going to part ways, so there's not much here in the way of surprises. Daisy Prince is the director. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

MAMMA MIA!
This smorgasbord of song, the brainchild of Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus, the male half of the seventies supergroup ABBA, is nothing but hokum—a chucklehead pleasure. Catherine Johnson's book, which is simply a slick cartoon, connects the dots between the band's No. 1 singles. (11/5/01) (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 563-5544.)

MARIA DEL BOSCO (SEX & RACING CARS: A SOUND OPERA)
The avant-garde playwright Richard Foreman's fiftieth play. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

THE MASTER BUILDER
The Century Center's Ibsen series continues with the playwright's 1892 drama. (111 E. 15th St. 279-4200.)

THE MATCHMAKER
In Phyllis Ryan's adaptation of John B. Keane's novella "Letters of a Matchmaker," Des Keogh and Anna Manahan spend most of the evening about ten feet apart on the small stage, directly interacting only a couple of times. The two excellent actors portray a colorful assortment of letter writers, all of them looking for an escape from loneliness in a time and place before personal ads and Internet dating—the rural west of Ireland in the nineteen-fifties. Keogh plays the title character, one Dicky Mick Dicky O'Connor, who not only arranges the unions but also follows up with emotional support and sometimes extremely intimate practical advice. Director Michael Scott manages to avoid the static pitfalls inherent in the format, thanks to the grand expressiveness of his actors and to the consummate blarney and great good humor at the heart of Keane's work. (Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes March 31.)



Reg Rogers, Francie Swift, and Peter Frechette, in "The Dazzle."

MICHAEL WITTE

METAMORPHOSES
Mary Zimmerman's contemporary adaptation of several of Ovid's myths. (3/18/02) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

MISS EVERS' BOYS
David Feldshuh's drama, inspired by experiments that the U.S. Public Health Service performed on black men from the thirties through the seventies to determine the effects of untreated syphilis. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 279-4200.)

MR. GOLDWYN
Alan King takes the stage to portray the film producer Samuel Goldwyn. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

NECESSARY TARGETS
In Eve Ensler's new play, a New York psychiatrist (Shirley Knight) goes to Bosnia in 1995 to help treat the women at a refugee camp. She has arrived with all the wrong clothes and with little preparation (she thinks people in Bosnia speak Bosnian). At first, she is undone by the demands of the situation, and then is remade by what those demands bring out in her. Working with her is a tough young trauma counsellor (Catherine Kellner), who is writing a book about people in trouble spots around the world and is a one-dimensional stand-in for all cold-hearted journalists who are interested only in the story, not in the people telling it. The play proceeds predictably, but Knight makes her character's transformation moving. (3/11/02) (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

NOISES OFF
Jeremy Sams's revival of Michael Frayn's 1982 backstage comedy, a farce within an antic farce, is blissful fun. As the dysfunctional troupe of the travelling show "Nothing On," all the members of the excellent cast shine in roles that lesser comedians would surely find daunting. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

ONE MO' TIME
The hottest quintet on Broadway anchors this evening of song and sass, which Vernel Bagneris ("Jelly Roll!" and "Staggerlee") wrote, directed, and again stars in (it was originally staged at the Village Gate in 1979). The show re-creates an evening in 1926 at New Orleans's Lyric Theatre, a major stop on the black entertainment circuit. Although the acting and singing are put over with charm, there's no story to speak of—this is cabaret with a few scenes interspersed, not a musical—and the characters and interpretations are familiar, so there's no real spark or originality there. On the other hand, the music, by the New Orleans Blues Serenaders, blows the roof off. These five musicians, under the direction of Orange Kellin, infuse the show with enough power to transport the audience straight to the Land of Dreamy Dreams. (Longacre, 200 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

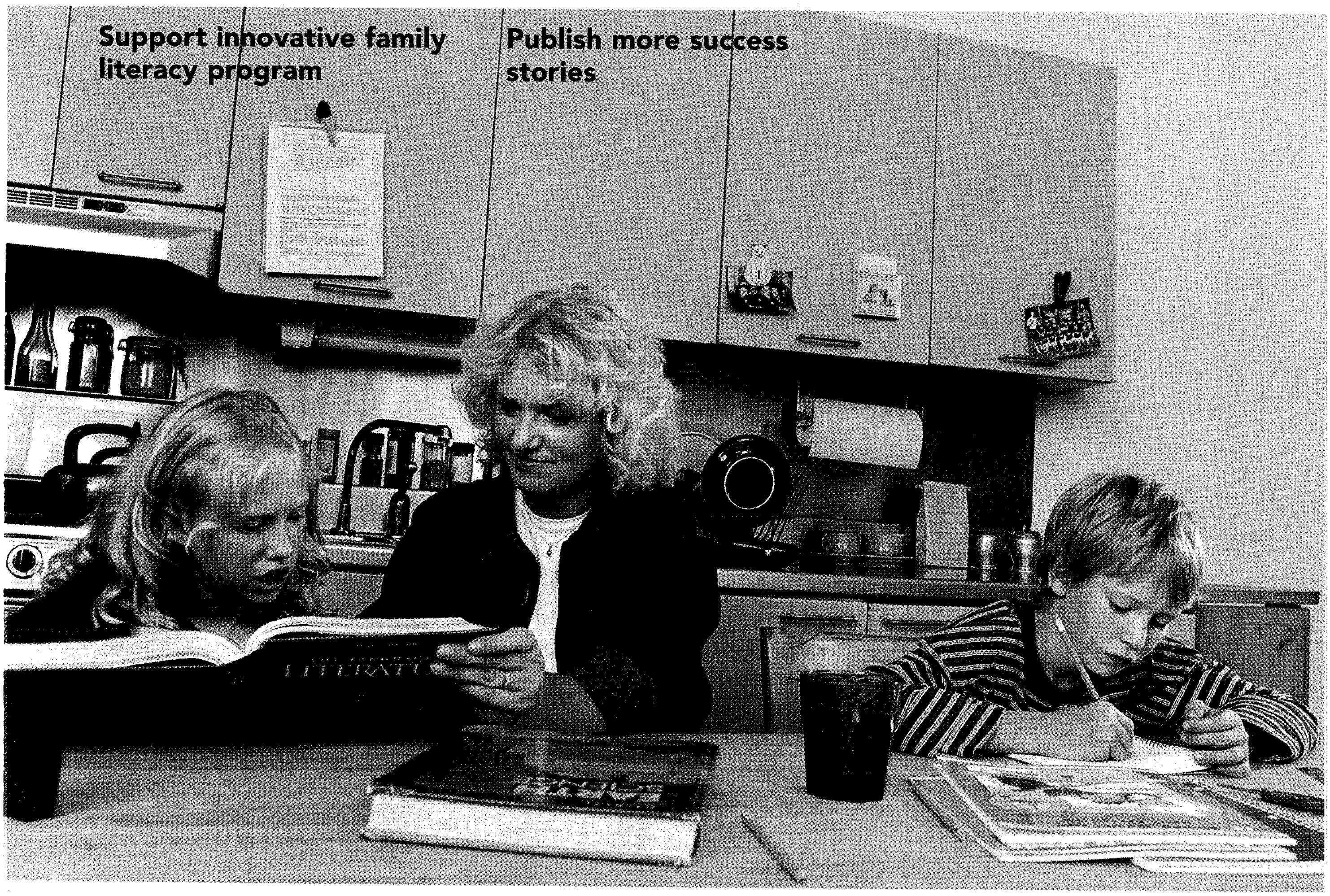
PRODIGAL
A young man leaves his small Australian home town for the big city, in a musical by Mathew Frank and Dean Bryant. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 239-6200.)

QED
Peter Parnell's play, starring Alan Alda as the physicist Richard Feynman, buzzes with life. Set in 1986—the year of the Challenger explosion, whose causes Feynman helped to investigate—"QED" takes us through an afternoon and evening in Feynman's office at Caltech, where he talks about such subjects as photons, drumming, the Manhattan Project, cancer, and "South Pacific." Alda's performance, which makes much use of that scrunchy-eyed smile of his, is one of utter charm. Sundays and Mondays only. (11/26/01) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

SURVIVING GRACE
A play by Trish Vradenburg, about a fraught mother-and-daughter relationship. Illeana Douglas and Doris Belack star. Jack Hofsiss directs. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-7171.)

SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS
John Lithgow is the gossip columnist J. J. Hunsecker, in a musical version of the 1957 film. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

TODAY TOMORROW TOYOTA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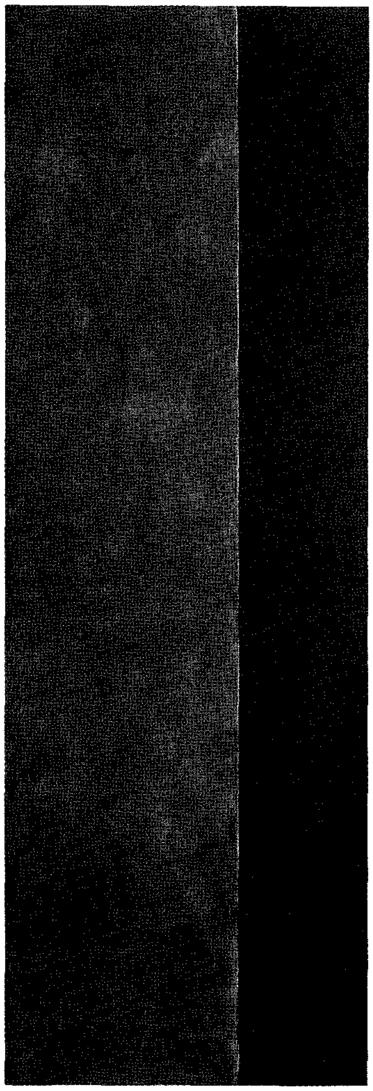

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Barnett Newman, *Ulysses*, 1952, 132 x 50 in.
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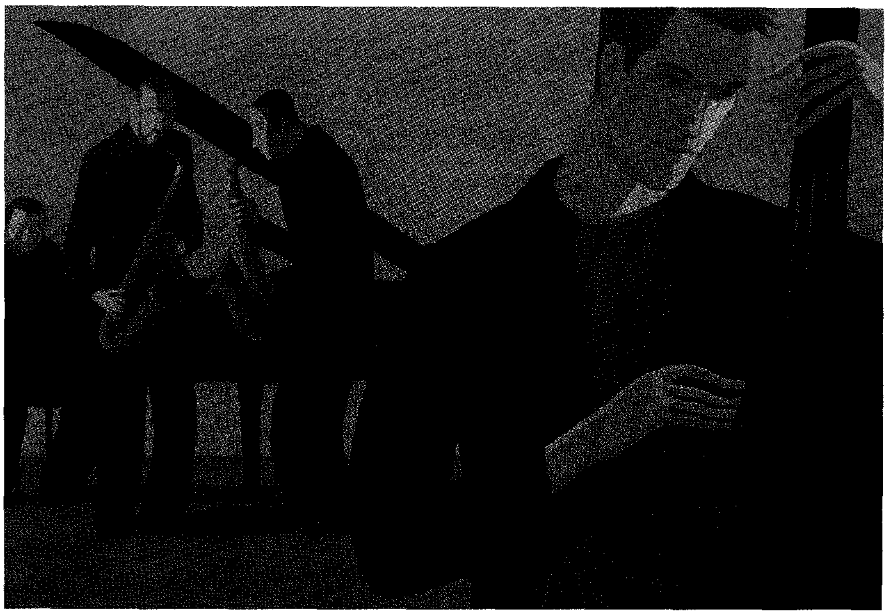
THROW PITCHFORK
A one-man show by Alexander Thomas, in which he explores growing up black in a family with three brothers and an alcoholic father. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

TO YOU, THE BIRDIE! (PHÈDRE)
The venerable Wooster Group's latest work, which is based on Racine's "Phèdre" and stars Frances McDormand, Kate Valk, and Willem Dafoe, has the power to remind flagging audiences of the exhilarating joys of live theatre. After more than twenty-five years, this avant-garde troupe is still modder than mod—and super smart. With typically exquisite choreography of video and sound and a wry cast, they conjure a fresh and witty take on the ancient story. It's got heartbreaking tragedy, it's got comedy, it's got scatological sex, and it's got amazing feats of badminton. What more do you really need in a play? (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 966-3651.)



FORWARD THINKING *After nearly a yearlong hiatus and a renovation, the Jazz Standard makes a canny move by reopening with the Jazz Composers Collective. Through original compositions, uncommon instrumentation, and a broad range of influences, Ben Allison's Medicine Wheel, the Ted Nash quintet, Michael Blake's Free Association, and the other bands in the Collective focus on where jazz can go rather than where it's already been.*

PEP MONTSERRAT

UNEQUALIBRIUM
A contemporary one-man variation on Homer's Odyssey, starring Alexander Lyras. (Gene Frankel Theatre, 24 Bond St. 462-3107.)

URINETOWN
The amount of fun to be had at this musical, by Greg Kotis (book and lyrics) and Mark Hollmann (music and lyrics), is in direct proportion to the unpleasantness of its title. Its central idea is that an evil corporation controls all the toilets in a city that bears some resemblance to New York, but the show is really no more and no less than a terrifically spirited sendup of musicals and their conventions, as self-conscious and gag-happy as a Warner Bros. cartoon. (10/1/01) (Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.
BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.
CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.
CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
CONTACT
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.
FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.
42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.
THE FULL MONTY
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.
I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.
THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.
LOVE, JANIS
Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.
PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.
THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.
PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.
RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.
THE SYRINGA TREE
Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.
THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.
TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.
THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

URBAN TAP
When asked about his troupe's current show, Herbin Tamango Van Cayseele patiently explains that his group is not a troupe but a gathering of free spirits and that what they create is not a show but a journey "through all art. It's about *connecting*." For the less cosmic among us, the global reach of "Full Cycle" will suffice. Urban Tap's spectacle of street dance, hoofing, ethno-jazz music, and careening video projections boasts among its free spirits an Italian trum-

peter, a Brazilian capoeirista, a Tunisian vocalist, a French videographer, a New York break-dancer, a Haitian drummer, and, of course, Tamango—the event's Pied Piper, a svelte and speedy tap dancer from French Guiana by way of Paris. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. March 19-23 at 8 and March 24 at 2 and 7:30. Through March 29.)

BALLET BUILDERS
The twelfth installment of New Choreographers on Point offers eight new works, including "Cut on the Bias," by Penelope Freeh, "Blue Bulb Sweep," by Ryan Kelly, and "Neruda," by Gabriela Poler. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 307-4100. March 23 at 8 and March 24 at 3.)

DONNA UCHIZONO COMPANY
"Low," one of two dances on the program, was inspired by a month Uchizono spent in Argentina with Indians from the Tobas nation. They kept low to the ground and "just weren't ever in a hurry," the choreographer says. "Low" also moves very slowly and lowly, with the three dancers splayed out on the floor for long stretches, like stray pieces in a missing jigsaw puzzle. It all comes together, however, when they stand up. A man and a woman dance a tango in which the usual touch and pull of chest and arms has migrated south, to the lower limbs. Their calves lock like horns, and their heads toss and turn as if shaking off a passion. The dancers revolve around and around one another like a broken record stuck on sublime. (Dance Theatre Workshop at the Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 924-0077. March 21-23 at 8 and March 24 at 3.)

AILEY II
The junior troupe of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre performs repertory from the parent company in its tenth annual New York season. (Davis Hall, City College, Convent Ave. at 134th St. 650-7100. March 22 at 8, March 23 at 2 and 8, and March 24 at 3.)

"FREEDUMB"
The choreographer Nami Yamamoto uses the playground game capture the flag as the setting for three women to confront their grief and confusion after September 11th. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. March 21-24 at 8:30.)

NANCY MEEHAN DANCE COMPANY
For its thirty-first-anniversary season, the troupe presents "Timings" and the première of "Twelve Feet on a Wooden Plane." (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. March 22-24 at 8:30.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

RYAN ADAMS
Three years after the dissolution of his celebrated alternative-country combo, Whiskeytown, the stylishly scruffy singer-songwriter Adams has morphed into a megastar. Becoming a pal of Sir Elton John and an erstwhile lover of Winona Ryder may have helped, but his earnest brand of folksy rock (with a few obvious nods to Bob Dylan and the Replacements' Paul Westerberg) deserves the real credit. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. March 21 at 7:30.)

"AMERICAN SONGBOOK"
March 22 at 8 and 10: She likes a Gershwin tune, how about you? A walking compendium of quality songs from the thirties and forties, the vocalist—and when the mood strikes her, dancer—**Mary Cleere Haran** presents a program of the composer's work. March 23 at 8 and 10: The singer **Judy Kuhn**, recently heard in the Off Broadway Laura Nyro tribute show, "Eli's Comin'," showcases choice songs by Nyro, Billy Joel, Tom Waits, Adam Guettel, and others. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 721-6500.)

PUDDLE OF MUDD
These frowning protégés of Limp Bizkit front man/mogul Fred Durst (who signed the upstarts to his label, Flawless Records) eschew the hackneyed faux-hip-hop posturing of their mentor and instead plunder the already desecrated grave of grunge. Lacking the slightest shred of originality, Puddle of Mudd makes a strong case for the death of rock as a creatively viable medium. (Roseland. March 22 at 7:30.)

BERTHA HOPE
Jazz aficionados recognize the short-lived Elmo Hope as a bright constellation of the hard-bop era, a spiky pianist and gifted composer whose personality-filled work deserves wider recognition. Hope's widow, Bertha, herself a considerable pianist and composer, leads the cause. (Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, 58 Seventh Ave., Park Slope. 718-622-3300. March 23 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—March 21: **Beth Nielsen Chapman**, who has written country-music hits for the likes of Faith Hill, Willie Nelson, and Lorrie Morgan, has had her songs performed on popular television shows ("E.R.," "Dawson's Creek," and "Felicity") and in big-budget movies ("The Prince of Egypt," "Message in a Bottle"). In other words, you've been listening to her all along. Her sixth solo album, "Deeper Still," is another fine collection of country-influenced, adult-contemporary pop. With a voice as graceful as handmade lace, Chapman uses small details to reveal big emotions.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—March 25: **Daniel Ash,** a svelte, androgynous veteran of a different age, provided both the snarling guitar bite of the seminal goth band Bauhaus and the expansive psychedelic flourish of the comparatively poppy Love and Rockets. March 26: The ambitious and hirsute **Andrew W.K.** is a perpetually sweaty and occasionally bloody young man who seeks to make his raw-knuckled guitar blitzkrieg accessible to a wide pop-loving audience. By sprucing up such gloriously lowbrow anthems as "Party Hard," "Party 'Til You Puke," and, believe it or not, "It's Time to Party" with incongru-

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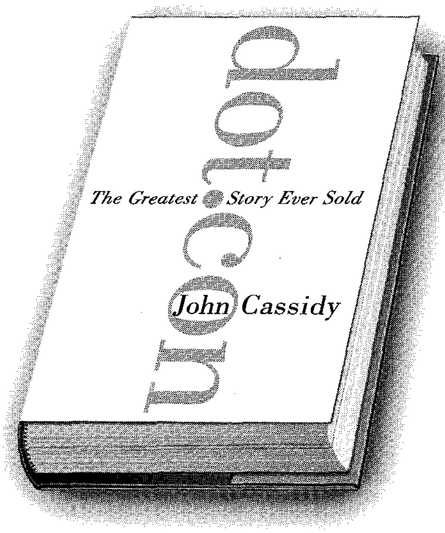

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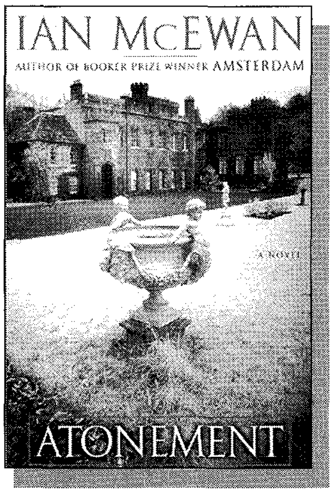

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TABLES FOR TWO

BID
1334 York Ave. (988-7730)—The neighborhood north of New York Hospital is hardly the most pedestrian-friendly of areas, but strollers along York Avenue between Seventieth and Seventy-first Streets will be warmed by a surprising sight—a softly lit dining room, just below street level, in Sotheby's. In the well-patrolled foyer of the auction house, a sign bearing the restaurant's name points down a flight of stairs, which leads into a spacious room that looks like the perfect setting for a shipboard romance circa 1951: undulating banquettes, flying-saucer chandeliers, discreetly illuminated art, and enough space between the tables to ensure that no one will overhear your conversation about how much you're planning to spend on that Matisse.

Bid's servers, crisply outfitted in beige vests, announce the option of a four-, five-, or seven-course tasting menu of your own devising. The talented young chef, an alumnus of Gramercy Tavern named Matt Seeber, must have really put away the condiments as a kid. His terrific sautéed quail is accompanied by Savoy cabbage, yellowfoot chanterelles, and a turnip-and-apple cider; the hot and cold foie gras is served with apple chutney, cider vinegar, cardamom, and vanilla bean. Plain New England cod gets a weekend at the Ritz with brandade, zucchini confit, niçoise olives, almonds, and preserved lemon; "chowder" was never less chowdery, coming as it does with braised lobster, celery root, fennel, bluefoot mushrooms, and bacon. The kitchen presents sirloin and short rib of beef in tandem, joined by farro, roasted beets, tripe, and a sprinkling of black-truffle oil. A well-appointed squab also gets the double treatment—crisp-roasted breast next to slow-braised leg.

Desserts, by the pastry chef Chika Tillman, are offered on two levels—elevated homey combinations without alcohol, such as the apple tart tatin with Granny Smith granita and vanilla ice cream, and elevated homey combinations with alcohol, such as the same dish spiked with a twenty-six-year-old Calvados. When it's *all* over, landing the Matisse may not seem so important after all. (Open weekdays for lunch and dinner, Saturdays for dinner only. Entrées $25-$32.)

—*Charles Michener*

---

ously cheesy keyboard fills, W.K. injects a welcome bit of light and humor into today's otherwise adrenalized, testosterone-heavy nü-metal scene.

FEZ
380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—March 23: The wonderful Los Angeles-based singer-songwriter **Eleni Mandell** makes a rare New York City appearance. The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—March 19-20: The seminal punk-rock band **Television** always seemed a touch more understated than their leather-clad peers, especially after the punk prototype Richard Hell left the band. Favoring angular fragments and nimble noodlings over brazen power chords or self-involved solos, Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd defied sterile seventies rock. Though they chose to sit out the following decade, Television's sophisticated and unconventional sound influenced a thousand bands, becoming a crucial link between the Velvet Underground and the Strokes. March 21: **Chicks on Speed** gleefully debase the term "art rock." March 26: Following a lacklustre album poisoned by electronica, 1998's "Redneck Wonderland," the politically charged Australian band **Midnight Oil** comes to town with songs from its new release, "Capricornia," which may be its most relaxed and breezy effort ever. In concert, however, the Oils, led by their looming bald titan of a lead singer, Peter Garrett, deliver an intense polemic. During the band's twenty-five-year career, the live shows have achieved renown.

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg (718-599-5103)—March 20: The shimmering pop of **Mates of State.**

RODEO BAR
375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—March 20: The Faulkner scholar and country rocker **Florence Dore.** March 22-23: **Rosie Flores,** a mean, guitar-toting San Antonio rose who has long been the darling of the Austin and L.A. country circuits, has a voice that, like Gram Parsons', cracks in all the right places.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—March 22: Brooklyn's **Barbez** binds together *musette,* tango, and punk to create Brecht-flecked café rock for sophisticated audiences.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—March 21-24: One of rock and roll's more enduring eccentrics, **Roy Wood,** from the Midlands of England, was a founder of the Move, the Electric Light Orchestra, and dozens of other, less influential, bands, including, during the nineties, an all-girl swing orchestra. These appearances, with his twelve-piece band, the Army, are his first New York shows in some twenty-eight years.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through March 24: With a tone as wide as the pampas, the Argentine tenor saxophonist **Gato Barbieri** has worn many stylistic hats since the sixties—while always sticking with the black fedora that is his calling card—from bruising avant-gardist to film composer (the lusty score for "Last Tango in Paris") to Latin-music champion to smooth jazz icon. A bit of it all will probably find its way onto the bandstand.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through March 23, **David Campbell.** Relying more on his youthful energy, Aussie wit, and an offbeat repertoire than on his serviceable voice, Campbell charms his way through an agreeable program that finds room for songs ranging from Rodgers and Hart to Crowded House.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through March 24: The **McCoy Tyner** trio, featuring **Bobby Hutcherson.** The pianist Tyner and the vibraphonist Hutcherson go way back—their sterling collaborations on Blue Note in the sixties, including Hutcherson's "Stick Up," are modal-jazz classics. They've made empathetic recordings since then that display their mutual feel for tumbling phrases, scurrying rhythms, and modern forms softened by romantic sensibilities. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

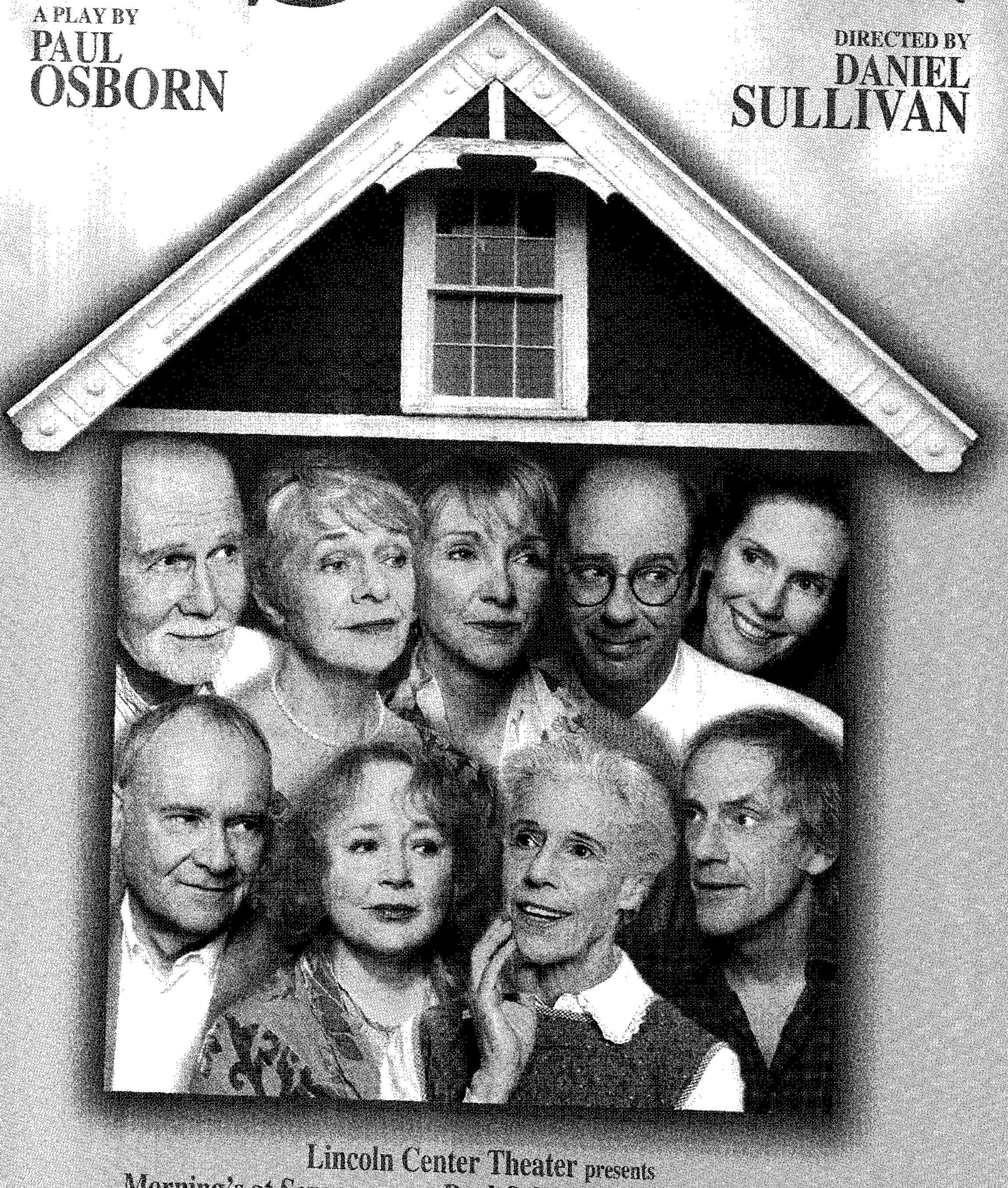
JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—The bands of the **Jazz Composers Collective** reopen this subterranean space. March 19: The Herbie Nichols Project reinterprets the work of the iconoclastic composer-pianist. March 20: The former Lounge Lizard saxophonist Michael Blake and his band Free Association. March 21: The Frank Kimbrough trio. March 22: The bassist and Collective linchpin Ben Allison and his band Medicine Wheel. March 23: The Ted Nash quintet. March 24: The Herbie Nichols Project. Dining.

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (864-6662)—March 22-23: The trumpeter **Eddie Henderson** (here with his quintet) is neither jazz's only licensed psychiatrist—the pianist Denny Zeitlin also comes to mind—nor the first musician to have gained prominence during the heyday of fusion, in the seventies, only to return to the hard-bop fold during the more recent swing back to traditionalism. A nervy stylist who calls on the vintage sounds

MORNING'S AT SEVEN

A PLAY BY
PAUL OSBORN

DIRECTED BY
DANIEL SULLIVAN



Lincoln Center Theater presents
Morning's at Seven a play by Paul Osborn with (in alphabetical order)
Elizabeth Franz Julie Hagerty Buck Henry Piper Laurie Christopher Lloyd
William Biff McGuire Estelle Parsons Frances Sternhagen Stephen Tobolowsky
set John Lee Beatty costumes Jane Greenwood lighting Brian MacDevitt sound Scott Myers
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Estelle Parsons
as Cora

Frances Sternhagen
as Ida

Stephen Tobolowsky
as Homer

In 1939, Paul Osborn's offbeat and poignant *Morning's at Seven* closed after just a month of performances having premiered too closely on the heels of *Life With Father* and *The Man Who Came To Dinner.* Forty years later it won a Tony Award for Best Revival and ran 18 months! At the time, one prominent critic noted:

"Political passions, sociological imperatives, and topical gags come and go. The human condition -- dramatized simply and honestly -- has a way of always looking fresh. That's why, if I had to guess which play might be revived again years from now, I'd put my money on *Morning's at Seven.*"

Lincoln Center Theater has brought together a remarkable ensemble of actors to inhabit the characters of this gentle, rueful comedy to be directed by Tony-winner Daniel Sullivan, for a new generation of theatergoers.

At the play's center are four aging sisters. Three of them have lived next door to each other for fifty years. Give or take a family secret or two, they live mostly quiet lives with their husbands. What seems like humorously dysfunctional family life becomes emotionally charged as they begin to question how to live out their remaining years. By the end there's hope that, as the poet Robert Browning wrote, "Morning's at seven... God's in his heaven...and all's right with the world."

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PHOTOS: MICHAEL LAMONT

of Miles Davis and Clifford Brown, Henderson plays like he's hungrily making up for lost time.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through March 24: Through sheer tenacity and the application of a vocal talent that has steadily ripened with the passing years, **Carol Sloane** has become one of the grandes dames of jazz singing. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

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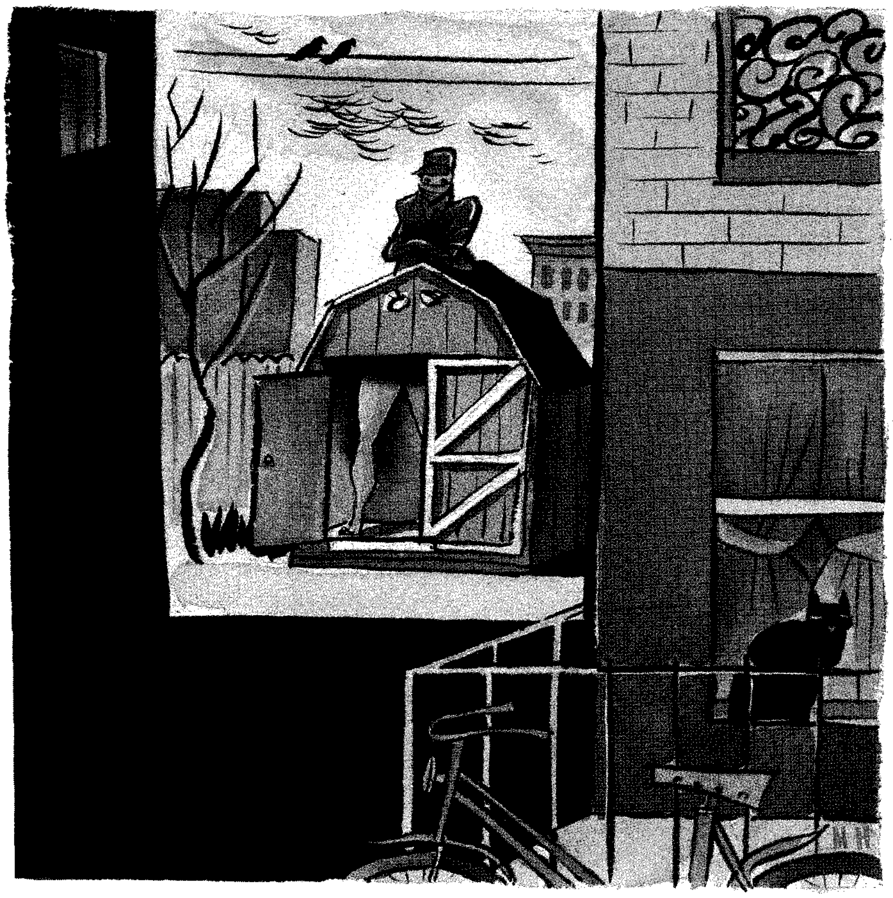
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"Surrealism: Desire Unbound"** is a big, fairly resistible show, with scattered delights, that labors to pump up the long-deflated blimp of Surrealism with a panting emphasis on sex. There's fine work by Picasso, Miró, and Giacometti, but the more orthodox dream illustrations of Dali, Ernst, and so on look more tired than ever. The show's strong suits are erotic photography and drawing; its man of the hour is Hans Bellmer, the weird German whose indelibly shocking photos of anatomically preposterous female dolls are back in vogue these days. Through May 5. ♦ **"Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi: Father and Daughter Painters in Baroque Italy."** Virtually the only woman painter among the fraternity of Old Masters, Artemisia Gentileschi has inspired novels, films, and a current play, thanks in part to speculation about her romantic misfortunes. Was she raped by her father's colleague? Or was she simply, as one sixties-era scholar put it, "a lascivious and precocious girl" who sued her lover for not making good on his marriage promises? Either way, she was a painter of great and often grisly refinement, as this dual survey makes clear. Like Caravaggio, who inspired their realist style, the Gentileschis didn't skimp on skin, gold, velvet, or violence; Artemisia's depiction of Judith modelling a low-cut blue gown as she beheads a struggling Holofernes is a cleavage picture in both senses. While Artemisia rarely equalled the delicacy of her father's naturalism, she had a more focussed eye for narrative nuance: note the way Judith has rolled up her sleeves before getting to work. Through May 12. ♦ **"Earthly Bodies: Irving Penn's Nudes, 1949-50."** Through April 21. ♦ **"Benjamin Brecknell Turner: Rural England Through a Victorian Lens."** Through April 21. ♦ **"Splendid Isolation: Art of Easter Island."** Through Aug. 4. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)


Nina Levy's double-life-size sculpture, at Williamsburg's Holland Tunnel gallery.

MARCELLUS HALL

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—**"Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting."** Gerhard Richter has worked in many styles since 1961, when he escaped from East Germany. They include mordant variations on Pop art, hauntingly beautiful Photo-Realist paintings in several genres, abstracts that convey self-doubt with panache, and a fifteen-canvas masterpiece of history painting, about the deaths in 1977 of Baader-Meinhof terrorists who had convulsed Germany for a decade. Previously seen piecemeal here, his art has struck many as tricky and cold, but it turns out that it aches with emotion. Richter's love of painting, in a tense relationship with his fierce skepticism, generates sustained intellectual drama with regular bonuses of rapture. This show may redraw the map of painting's place in the wider culture. Through May 21. ♦ **"Life of the City."** The museum offers a belated and somewhat misguided valentine to New York City in a show that combines photographs of the city from the permanent collection with an ever-changing installation of images solicited from amateurs. (Guidelines for participation are detailed in an attendant brochure.) The first section spans the last century and includes almost a hundred and fifty pictures by a mix of artists and photojournalists, hung salon-style in thematic groupings. (One playful cluster features portraits of picture takers, including Weegee in a paddy wagon in 1940 and Robert Frank capturing his own reflection in a window in 1947). The unattributed contri-

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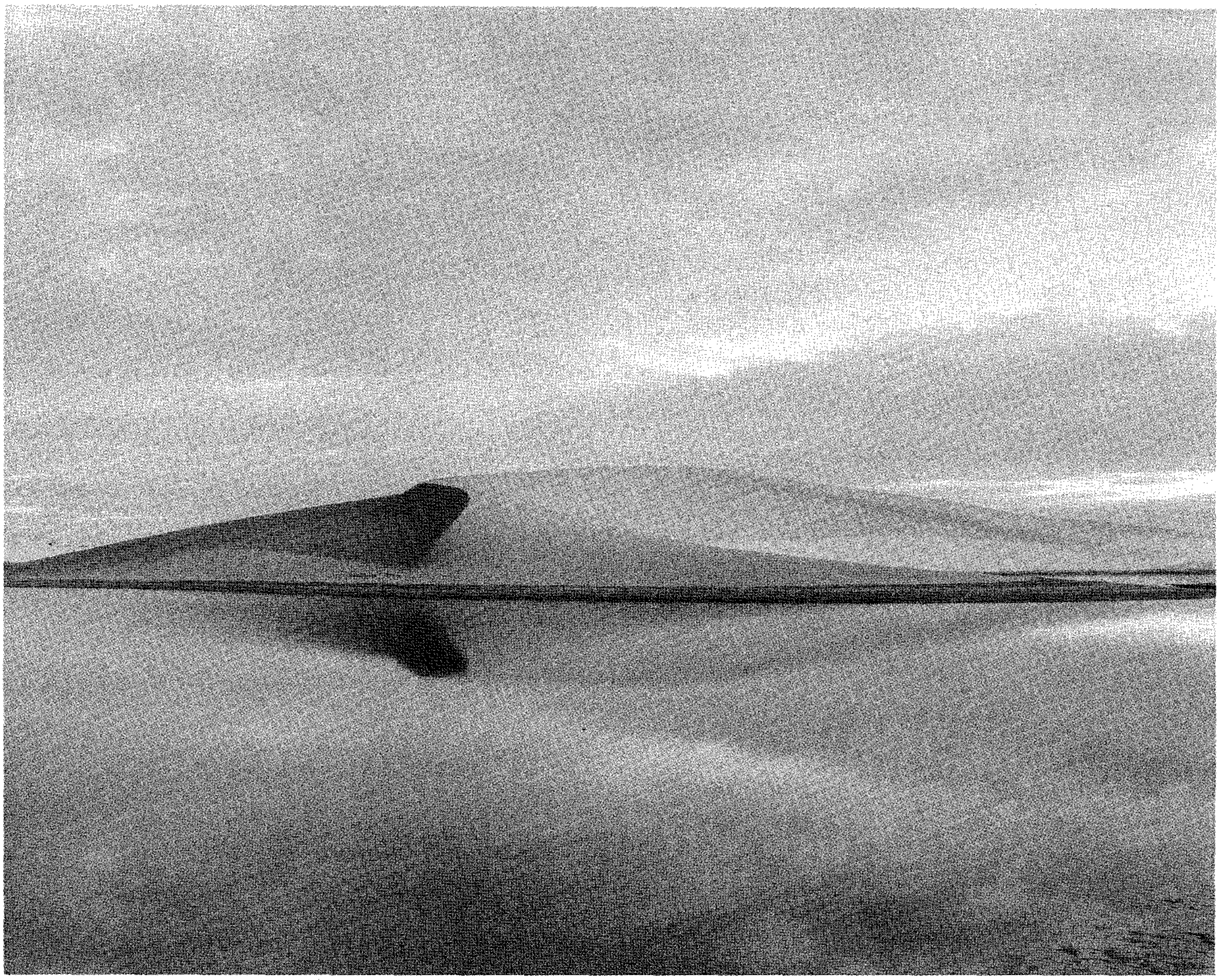
AND: A calendar of *New Yorker* events across the country



"Battleground Point, #20," from Richard Misrach's "Desert Canto" series, at Mann.

butions by present-day shutterbugs, ranging from casual family snapshots to street scenes worthy of Helen Leavitt, are tacked to the wall with pushpins. The aesthetic hierarchy implicit in the differing presentations undercuts the curator's supposedly egalitarian initiative. Through May 21. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—**"Brazil: Body and Soul."** Through May 29. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The museum throws its largest Biennial since 1981, with 113 artists working in about that many mediums. Through May 26. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Jewish Life in Ancient Egypt"** presents eight of the world's best preserved papyri, part of the museum's collection, which originated in a Jewish settlement, Elephantine Island, eight hundred years after the Exodus from Egypt. Through May 12. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

ASIA SOCIETY
725 Park Ave., at 70th St. (288-6400)—After a trip through this exquisitely installed show, **"The New Way of Tea,"** it's easy to see the wisdom in the proverb "Better to be deprived of food for three days than tea for one." Inspired by the traditional Japanese chanoyu, or tea ceremony, the show (which runs concurrently at the Japan Society) presents interpretations of the art by contemporary Asian artists, architects, and designers. The main gallery, as hushed as a zendo, is dominated by four contemporary versions of a teahouse. Artist Jae Eun Choi's glass structure, empty save for a single bowl of water, is a reflection on nothingness. Architect Atsushi Kitagawara's empty wooden cube is an homage to John Cage's silent musical composition "4' 33"." Through May 19. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—**"Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art,"** an exhibition of works that rely on Nazi-era imagery, created by popular young artists such as Elke Krystufek, Mat Collishaw, and Tom Sachs, lets museumgoers debate whether the pieces are closer to "Shoah" or show-and-tell. Through June 30. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
583 Broadway (219-1222)—This drawing retrospective marks the first American museum exhibition for the Cape Town-born, Amsterdam-based artist Marlene Dumas. Her ink-wash and watercolor drawings often have a physical touch so light they make the Shroud of Turin look like impasto, but her subject matter—racial prejudice, sexual perversion, religious piety—sandbags the levity with its blunt, even confrontational approach. The most powerful drawings here are presented cumulatively in grids, as in the more than a hundred "Black Drawings," anonymous head shots that range from a thug in a ski mask to a shy little girl. (Dumas's figures are all drawn from photographic material.) Whimsy does crop up occasionally, as in the Barbie doll with preternaturally blue eyes, though Dumas's palette is typically sombre and stain-colored—dirt browns and dried-blood rusts. Through June 2. (Open Wednesdays and Sundays, noon to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, noon to 8.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

JOHN BALDESSARI
"I will not make any more boring art," the artist said in a piece from 1971; this show proves that he's a man of his word. In his latest series, Baldessari continues to ransack his extensive archive of film stills, architectural photographs, and personal snapshots, cropping, enlarging, painting, and recombining them into quirky composites. Rock climbers intersect beach scenes, sleeping dogs lie atop office towers, and shark cages collide with high-rise buildings with the irrational logic of dreams. Through March 30. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160.)

WALTER BECK
Beck (1864-1954) long ago fell into an obscurity partly of his own making. By 1921, he'd perfected his "starch-film" tempera-painting technique, combining the delicate yet saturated hues of fresco with the gestural fluidity of calligraphy, and the accomplishment earned him comparisons to Sargent and Marin. Then he married an heiress and retired from the art world to cultivate his upstate garden, Innisfree. So nearly all of the thirty-five small starch-film paintings have never been exhibited before, and they emit the quiet glow of rescued treasures. Most

are nature studies: a spear of iris, winter trees, a rabbit in tall grass. But the frictionless surface achieved by rolling hot starch onto wet blotting paper allows for a strangely poised and expressive lyricism, equal parts Audubon, O'Keeffe, and Hokusai. Through March 29. (York, 21 E. 65th St. 772-9155.)

DAVID HOCKNEY
This exuberant show celebrates the Metropolitan Opera's revival of Hockney's 1981 stage and set designs for "Parade," a triple bill of Satie, Poulenc, and Ravel. (The paintings and works on paper are all from the artist's private stash.) Natty harlequins, a singing frog, and fat ladies vie for attention, but don't miss the clever, Cubist collage tucked away in a nook of its own. A study for the character of stage manager, the piece is also an homage to Picasso, who designed the first production of "Parade" in 1917. Through April 6. (Richard Gray, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 472-8787.)

Short List

MAX BECKMANN
Feigen, 34 E. 69th St. 628-0700. Through May 24.
NANCY GRAVES
Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550.
Through April 27.
DAVID HUMPHREY
Littlejohn, 41 E. 57th St. 980-2323.
Through March 23.
RICHARD PATTERSON
James Cohan, 41 W. 57th St. 755-7171.
Through March 23.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

HARUN FAROCKI
The veteran German Conceptualist Harun Farocki takes on the increasingly sophisticated technologies of surveillance in two installations. One, "Eye/Machine," is a split-screen essay on the development of driverless vehicles and operator-free cameras and their application in the Gulf War. "I Thought I Was Seeing Convicts" applies a similarly dry, documentary approach to the parallel uses of surveillance software in shopping centers and the California state prison system. They're not great to look at, but after you leave you won't be able to walk past a wall-mounted video camera in a mall without thinking of a battlefield, a research lab, a prison yard. Through March 30. (Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770.)

Short List

ANNIKA LARSSON
Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.
Through March 23.
UGO RONDINONE
Matthew Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200.
Through April 20.

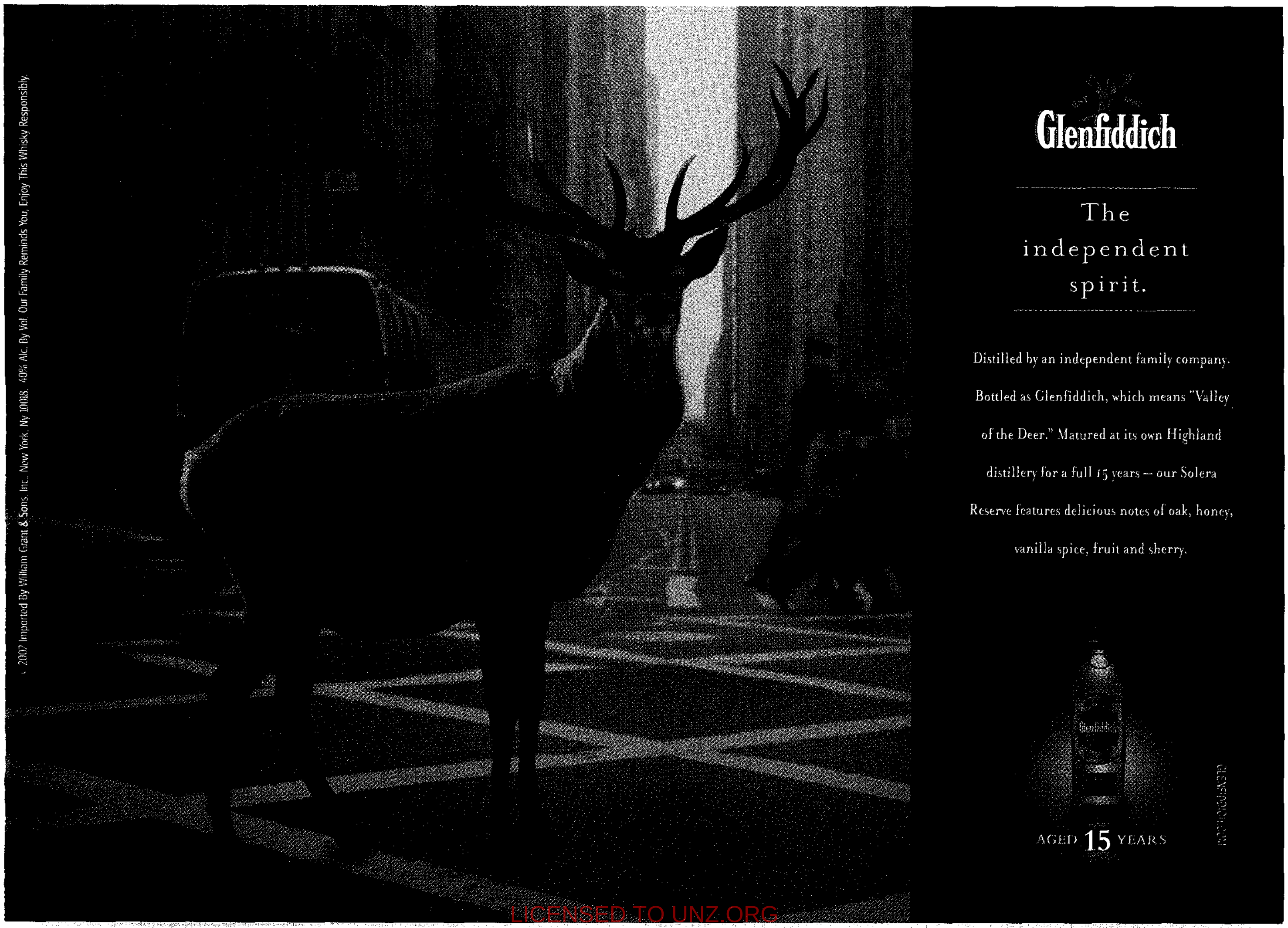
GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

VANESSA BEECROFT
It's hard not to moralize about Beecroft's work, which exploits the vocabularies of fashion and fascism to shed light on who knows what. Supposedly, her signature platoons of thin and affectless women, naked except for certain severe accessories (in this case thigh-high black-leather Helmut Lang boots or skimpy bondage-style bikinis and stiletto heels) question the ennui and tyranny of enforced notions of beauty. On this outing, she adds an extra tinge of troublesome appeal by contrasting a squad of pale bleached blondes with a troupe of women of color (an identification enhanced by Afro wigs and coatings of charcoal-toned makeup). An incisive commentary on race and the erotics of de-luxe militarism? Or is Beecroft turning into the Leni Reifenstahl of global capitalism? Through April 27. (Deitch Projects, 18 Wooster St. 343-7300.)

NANCY BURSON
The artist is best known for her invention, in 1981, of the software still used by the F.B.I. to help locate missing children; many of the portraits in this mid-career retrospective rely on digital manipulation. (The exhibition includes an interactive installation where viewers can test Burson's pioneering program on themselves.) The aging process is reversed in a pair of baby pictures of Elvis and Marilyn; elsewhere, male and female celebrities are conflated in a series of androgynous composite portraits from the eighties. More recently, Burson has turned an unaltered eye to "special faces," portraits of children and adults with facial abnormalities which convey dignity and pathos in equal measure. Through April 20. (Grey Art Gallery, 100 Washington Sq. E. 998-6780.)

ELLEN GALLAGHER
Gallagher's large and serenely disturbing paintings are known for their obsessive doodles of stereotypical racial features: stylized bug eyes, pouty lips, and flips of Betty-and-Veronica white-girl hair. In this series, she goes back to the source, inventively defacing beauty advertisements from back copies of *Ebony* or *Black Stars,* making the wig and skin-cream ads testify against themselves. Eyes are blanked out, tongues lasciviously extended, hair styles altered via cuttings or collage. Gallagher's touch is as delicate as her humor is savage, and it's a treat to see her exercise her skill on the intimate scale of this archival material. Through April 18. (Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166.)

KIM SOOJA
Mirrors line the gallery walls, reflecting scores of parti-colored silk bedcovers strung on rows of clothesline by clothespins. (The artist salvaged the textiles in her native South Korea, where newlyweds traditionally use them to symbolize good fortune.) The fabric sways in a breeze provided by overhead fans to an accompanying soundtrack of chanting monks and ringing bells that lends a beatific air to the installa-



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AGED 15 YEARS

tion. Associations drift from the mundane to the profound, as a cheery laundry day gives way to an infinite labyrinth of bliss. Through May 18. (Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441.)

Short List

TIM HAWKINSON
Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.
Through March 30.

MARLENE MC CARTY
Keenan, 3 Crosby St. 431-5083.
Through March 23.

GALLERIES–BROOKLYN

NINA LEVY
Although Levy makes sculptures of herself, usually naked, often larger than life and in odd places (two winters ago, one of them was jutting off a Chelsea warehouse roof for months), the work is surprisingly free of exhibitionism. Instead, she seems to offer herself as an example of various universal embarrassments. This time out, her upper half, bundled for winter, busts through the roof of a garden shed—actually, it's a mini gallery, Holland Tunnel—while her naked and spotlit bottom half stands spread-legged in the warmth of the gallery proper, for a comically literal take on the dilemma of the divided self. (61 S. 3rd St., at Wythe Ave., Williamsburg. 718-387-2714. Through March 24.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

AXEL HÜTTE
Hütte claims to be the first German out of the Düsseldorf Academy to create the kind of giant, mural-size C-prints later popularized by his classmates Thomas Struth and Andreas Gursky. His subjects—in this case, a London bridge, Hawaiian landscapes, and two glaciers—take a back seat to his experiments in monumentality, and his work is less inspired by German Romantic painting than by the all-over energy of Abstract Expressionism. Through March 23. (Cohan, Leslie and Brown, 138 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 206-8710.)

SIMEN JOHAN
The latest color works by this Norwegian artist portray otherworldly children in deceptive tableaux—in one, the child and the stuffed baboon in his Radio Flyer were photographed separately, in a Brooklyn studio, then transplanted digitally to an L.A. train yard. Johan hides his technical manipulation well and concentrates on the subjects, setting the youthful actors in suggestive scenes that hint at adult psychologies. Through April 6. (Milo, 552 W. 24th St. 414-0370.)

HELEN LEVITT
Because her subject was children and their fantasy lives, the mid-century photographer was often described as a kind of itinerant folk artist who happened upon her subjects by chance or intuition. In reality, she tirelessly and ambitiously combed New York's poorest neighborhoods (where the people often hung around outside) to find her subjects. On display here is a good example of her less fuzzy side—her photographs of graffiti, street drawings made by children, are rife with sex and violence. The hieroglyphic-like monsters drawn by the youngest children have a lyrical beauty that still looks strikingly modern. Through April 13. (Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930.)

RICHARD MISRACH
This is the twenty-fourth installment of Misrach's "Desert Canto" series in nearly as many years and it's stunning. The current batch was taken in Nevada's Carson Sink, in an area that floods every decade or so, and its images of a watery desert landscape connect sky, sand, and water in a way that seems positively unearthly. In one sequence, the shifting light captured in print after print makes the same dune almost unrecognizable. Misrach's huge color prints create a majestic vision of a world acting strangely. Through April 27. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 989-7600.)

KRAPPY KAMERA EXHIBITION
Henri Cartier-Bresson once said, "It is by great economy of means that one arrives at simplicity of expression." No means are more economical than the cameras used here: a Time-Life giveaway promo, a homemade pinhole camera, and a pink no-focus "Barbie-Cam." Getting back to the basics of light and shadow, these photographers prove how modestly wondrous photography can be. In particular, still-lifes by Cristina Ochagavia—featuring an unusual flower or a rakish shadow against a wall—make simple poetry with the humblest of means. Through March 30. (SoHo Photo, 15 White St. 226-8571.)

Short List

LAWRENCE BECK
Sonnabend, 536 W. 22nd St. 627-1018.
Through March 23.

PETER FISCHLI AND DAVID WEISS
Matthew Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200.
Through April 20.

NAOMI FISHER
Lombard-Freid, 531 W. 26th St. 967-8040.
Through March 23.

MICHAEL FLOMEN
Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819.
Through March 23.

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG
Pace MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999.
Through April 6.

"WOMEN BY WOMEN"
Cook, 1063 Madison Ave., at 80th St. 737-3550.
Through March 30.

See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Asian Week is here. March 20 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Two auctions of Chinese ceramics and other art works, including a pottery camel with rider and hunting owl from the early Tang dynasty (estimated to bring up to three hundred thousand dollars) and a selection of jade from the collection of Alan and Simone Hartman. ♦ March 21 at 10:15 A.M.: "Indian and Southeast Asian Art." ♦ March 22 at 10:15 A.M.: Indian paintings from the collection of Gloria Katz and Willard Huyck. "Radha Enters the Bower of Govinda," an exquisite, dark-toned watercolor circa 1775-80, is a highlight of the sale. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
March 20 at 10 A.M.: Art works from India and Southeast Asia. An imperial silk-and-gold embroidered tanka, from the fourteenth century, leads the sale. ♦ March 21 at 10 A.M.: Chinese ceramics and other art works, including a pottery figure of a Ferghana horse from the Tang dynasty, estimated to sell for at least half a million dollars. ♦ March 21 at 2: Chinese snuff bottles from the collection of Blanche B. Exstein. ♦ March 22 at 2 and 4: Two sessions devoted, respectively, to Japanese and Korean art works. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

ARTS OF PACIFIC ASIA SHOW
Eighty-three dealers offer a selection of Asian art works, ceramics, and textiles. (The Events Center, 32 W. 23rd St. 917-606-6378. March 22-24.)

DOYLE
March 26 at 10 A.M.: "American Furniture and Decorations," including folk-art paintings and decorative prints. A set of eight mahogany Chippendale side chairs circa 1775-85—owned by the same family since they were made—is a highlight of the sale. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

SWANN
March 21 at 10:30 A.M.: "Modern Literature," a sale featuring an extensive selection of books by such

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writers as Conrad, Tennessee Williams, and Hemingway (including one of fifteen advance copies of "For Whom the Bell Tolls," estimated to bring up to thirty thousand dollars). (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA

Otto Schenk's richly historical production of **"Rigoletto"** does little to blunt the work's preposterous clichés, but in Ruth Ann Swenson, theatrically demure and pure in tone, it has a Gilda of rare authenticity. Also with Ramón Vargas and Carlo Guelfi (in the title role); Marco Guidarini conducts. (March 20 and March 25 at 8.) ♦ **"Falstaff,"** with Bryn Terfel (singing the title role for the first time at the Met), Marina Mescheriakova, Camilla Tilling (a début), Stephanie Blythe, Susanne Mentzer, Gregory Turay, and Dwayne Croft; James Levine. (March 21 and March 26 at 8.) ♦ Near the close of Poulenc's 1945 opéra buffe "Les Mamelles de Tirésias"—one of three works featured in **"Parade,"** a revival of John Dexter's triple bill of French music theatre, assembled in 1981—Ainhoa Arteta's title character, dressed as a Gypsy fortune-teller and reassuming her femininity after demanding a sex change, glides in front of the orchestra pit and honors the front-row patrons with a serenade. This giddy, break-the-fourth-wall moment—half Bertolt Brecht, half Mel Brooks—may make the production seem a touch dated, but it has lost none of its punch. David Hockney's wacky sets, little more than painted flats, have retained their jovial innocence, as have his designs for the other two works, Ravel's "L'Enfant et les Sortilèges" (which the composer began with his librettist, Colette, in 1918) and Satie's ballet "Parade," a jazz-flecked vignette of life on a Parisian boulevard circa 1917 (which features a star turn from the New York City Ballet's Damian Woetzel, as the Harlequin). All, in their way, celebrate the saucy and the surreal in the shadow of war. Also with Danielle de Niese, Swenson, Mark Oswald, and Earle Patriarco; Levine. (March 22 at 8.) ♦ Elijah Moshinsky's production of Verdi's **"Luisa Miller,"** with Barbara Frittoli, Denyce Graves, Neil Shicoff, Phillip Ens, Roberto Frontali, and Hao Jiang Tian; Levine. This is the final performance. (March 23 at 1:30.) ♦ **"Madama Butterfly,"** with Daniela Dessì, Jane Bunnell, Fabio Armiliato, and William Shimmell; Marco Armiliato. (March 23 at 8.) ♦ The Met holds its annual Pension Gala Concert, featuring Angela Gheorghiu and Roberto Alagna in arias, duets, and ensembles by Bellini, Bizet, Verdi, and others; Bertrand de Billy conducts the Met Orchestra and Chorus. (March 24 at 5.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

The final two performances of **"Porgy and Bess,"** Tazewell Thompson's intimate staging of Sherwin M. Goldman's 1976 production of the complete work. For all the classic songs, this show is ultimately about a community in crisis, and the consistently high quality of the cast makes the troubles of Catfish Row both believable and affecting. With Alvy Powell and Marquita Lister in the title roles; John DeMain conducts. (March 20 at 8.) ♦ With Leonard Rowe and Marsha Thompson replacing Powell and Lister; Richard Bado. (March 22 at 8.) ♦ Thor Steingraber's new staging of **"Don Giovanni"** is in the best City Opera tradition—a simple set of classical arches, period costumes, and a strong, young ensemble cast. Amy Burton, a longtime favorite in lyric and soubrette roles, sings her first Donna Elvira; Peter Coleman-Wright is a smooth and sinister Don; and Nathan Berg brings the warmth and color of a lieder singer to the role of Leporello. George Manahan conducts. (March 21 and March 26 at 7:30 and March 24 at 1:30.) ♦ **"Carmen,"** with Paula Rasmussen, Elena Kolganova, William Joyner, and Brian Davis; Manahan. (March 23 at 1:30.) ♦ **"Tosca,"** with Anna Shafajinskaia, Carlo Ventre, and Jeffrey Kneebone; Steven Mosteller. (March 23 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 307-4100.)

OPERAWORKS: "THE GLASS MENAGERIE"

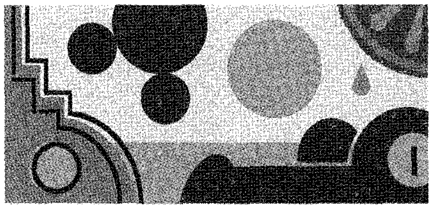
Antonio Bibalo may not be a big name in the U.S., but he has long been one of Europe's leading com-

STEPHEN SAVAGE

BOOK CURRENTS

Sunshine Boys

"He is the best PUDDING for mosquitoes that I ever saw. They work on him fast and vicious." The subject of this impish characterization, offered by the Palm Beach *Post* in 1918, was Addison Mizner, the three-hundred-pound bon vivant and Jazz Age architect credited with transforming the swampy coast of southern Florida into a thriving "Venice-on-the-Atlantic." In **BOCA ROCOCO** (Clarkson Potter), Caroline Seebohm tells how Mizner feasted on Florida's untapped possibilities the way the local insects feasted on him. With his pet chows and monkeys in tow, Mizner brought outlandish panache—and a heaping helping of Mediterranean Revival—to Palm Beach and envisioned Boca Raton as an audacious "Dream City in the Western World."



Mizner eventually went bust. But down in Miami Beach an improbable boom was taking off just as the Depression was digging in its heels. As Jean-François Lejeune and Allan T. Schulman point out in **THE MAKING OF MIAMI BEACH: 1933-1942** (Rizzoli/Bass Museum of Art), the architect Lawrence Murray Dixon used the streamlined forms of Art Deco to create the iconic hotels that still lure sun seekers to the former site of mangroves and avocado orchards. In the nineteen-sixties, Florida continued to attract big dreamers, notably Walt Disney. **MARRIED TO THE MOUSE** (Yale), by political scientist Richard E. Foglesong, shows how Disney, for better and worse, turned sleepy Orlando into the world's most popular tourist destination. Echoing Mizner's hopes for a modern Dream City, Disney World's Epcot Center was originally planned as a glistening urban utopia. But, in keeping with the whimsical ways of the Sunshine State, it mutated into a theme park.

—*Mark Rozzo*

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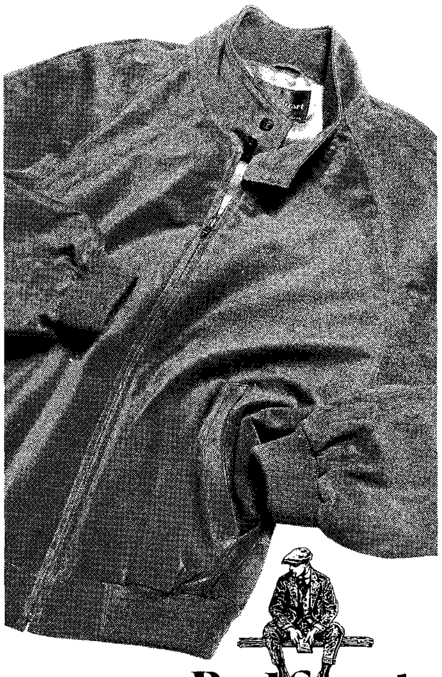

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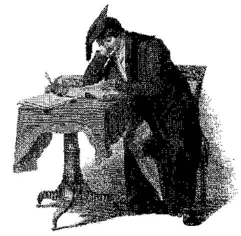

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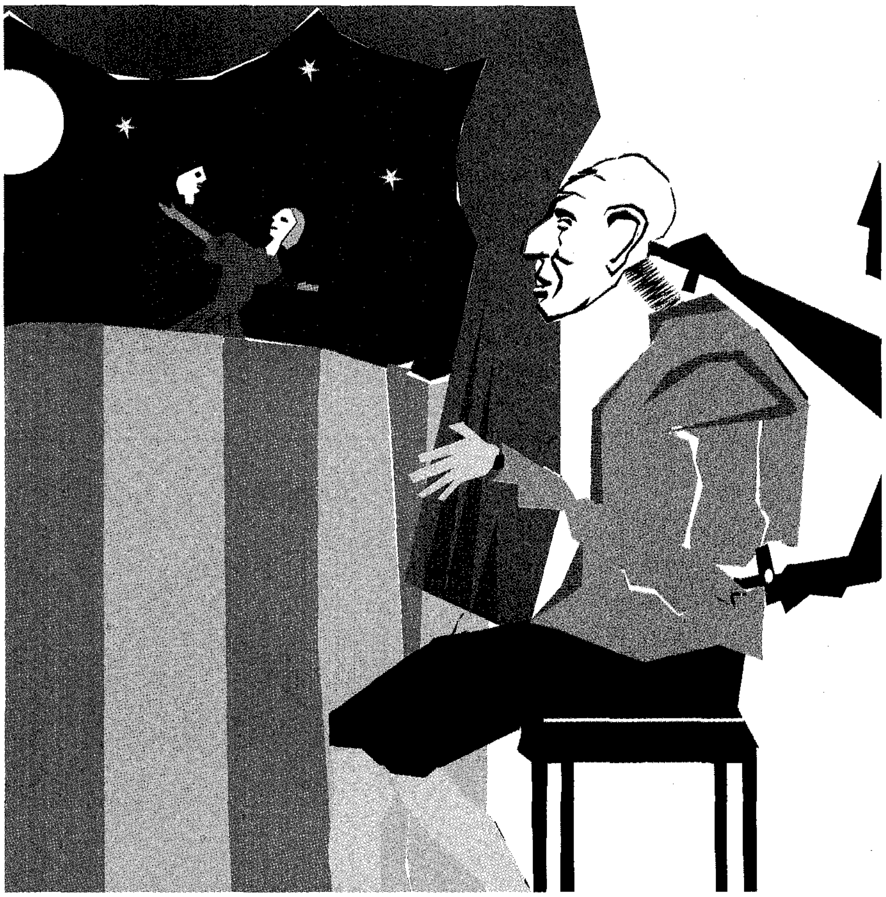
posers of opera. The innovative chamber company presents the American première of his most recent opera, based on the Williams play. (78th Street Theatre Lab, 236 W. 78th St. 873-9050. March 20 and March 22-23 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Charles Dutoit conducts the orchestra in music by Chopin (the Piano Concerto No. 2, with Nelson Freire) and Berlioz (the "Symphonie Fantastique"). (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. March 20-21 and March 23 at 8.)

EOS ORCHESTRA: "PUPPETS AND SPAIN"
Almost forgotten today, Falla's puppet opera "Master Peter's Puppet Show" (based on an episode from "Don Quixote") was once the favorite of Parisian intellectuals, who praised this spicy and astringent score as the ne plus ultra of nineteen-twenties neoclassicism. If anyone can save it from the shadows, it's the puppeteer Basil Twist, whose production of Berlioz's "Symphonie Fantastique" in a five-hundred-gallon water tank made an Off Broadway splash in 1999 (and is still touring internationally). Jonathan Sheffer conducts the program, which also includes Spanish-themed music by Bowles, Revueltas, and Ravel (the song cycle "Don Quichotte à Dulcinée" and a new chamber version of "Boléro"). (Ethical Culture Society Concert Hall, 2 W. 64th St. 691-6415. March 21 at 8.)



Basil Twist's puppets, in a Spanish program with the Eos Orchestra on March 21.

KIM DEMARCO

CHOIR OF TRINITY CHURCH: PURCELL'S "FUNERAL MUSIC FOR QUEEN MARY"
Since Trinity Church, the home of New York's first Anglican congregation, was founded by charter of Queen Mary II, it's a fitting place to perform the memorable "Funeral Music" that Henry Purcell wrote for her burial. The Rebel Baroque Orchestra accompanies the choir, in a re-creation that presents all the music performed at the actual service (including works by Morley, Paisible, and Tollett). (Broadway at Wall St. For information about tickets, call 279-4200. March 24 at 3 and March 25 at 1.)

RECITALS

GRANT JOHANESSEN
The veteran pianist's latest recital exhibits an almost giddy variety, starting off with Beethoven, Mozart, and Debussy (Book 2 of "Images") and proceeding to Copland, Farwell ("Navajo War Dance No. 2"), and Florent Schmitt ("Bronx," a vignette by the French Romantic iconoclast). (Bruno Walter Auditorium, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center. March 21 at 6:30. No tickets required.)

"AN EVENING OF LEO ORNSTEIN"
Jeanne Golan and Christopher Oldfather perform piano music by the Russian-American musical maverick, who died last month at the age of 109. The Sonata for Two Pianos, a reduction of the Piano Concerto (a heady mix of Russian Romanticism and the avant-garde that the composer premièred with the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1925), is the highlight of the program. (Greenwich House Concert Hall, 46 Barrow St. 242-4770. March 21 at 8.)

JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET
For the last half-century, Ralph Shapey has been crafting a type of music that, in its white-hot intensity and structural rigor, recalls the aesthetic of the major Abstract Expressionist painters—many of whom he knew well. The Juilliard, longtime devotees of his music, present the New York première of his Quartet No. 10 in a concert that also includes quartets by Haydn and Beethoven (the Op. 131, in C-Sharp Minor). (Alice Tully Hall. March 21 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

BEAUX ARTS TRIO
The piano trio (with guest violinist Daniel Hope) performs music by Schumann and Schubert (the Trio in B-Flat Major, Op. 99). (Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. March 22 at 8.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Leon Fleisher joins the Society in a program of Brahms (the Piano Quartet in C Minor), Korngold, and Mozart. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5788. March 22 at 8 and March 24 at 5.)

"ON WINGS OF SONG"
The tenor Ramone Diggs—the latest young singer to benefit from the nurturing patronage of the Marilyn Horne Foundation—offers a recital of songs by Brahms and Copland, arias from the Italian Baroque, and spirituals, at the Kosciuszko Foundation. (15 E. 65th St. 734-2130. March 24 at 3.)

MUSIC AT MERKIN CONCERT HALL
March 24 at 4: An die Musik performs works by Massenet and Mozart (the Piano Quartet in E-Flat Major) along with Jon Deak's "Rapunzel," narrated by Jenny Hayden. ♦ March 25 at 8: Two works stand out in Speculum Musicae's latest concert, Birtwistle's "Slow Frieze" (another of the composer's gripping, turbulent rituals, with the pianist Aleck Karis) and the first New York performance of Sebastian Currier's "Night Time," a sequence of nocturnes for harp and violin (which was premièred on a Berlin Philharmonic concert in 2000). (129 W. 67th St. 501-3330.)

MARKUS GROH
The young German pianist presents an exceptionally well integrated program, mixing music by Beethoven (the Sonata No. 5 in C Minor), Brahms, and Schoenberg with the splashy colors of Liszt's "Venezia e Napoli" and the doleful lilt of Thomas Adès's "Darknesse Visible," a Dowland tune filtered through the suggestive sensibility of a Whistler nightscape. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. March 24 at 5.)

MILLER THEATRE: MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN
Hamelin's playing has never been big on surface charm, but his steely endurance can give shape and structure to even the most outrageous piano music. His recital features works by three composers who transformed the decorous language of Russian late Romanticism into something scary, rich, and strange: Roslavetz, Ornstein, and Scriabin (including the Sonata No. 7, "White Mass"). (Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. March 26 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

ENCHANTED EVENINGS
A newly renovated and expanded Symphony Space reopens to the public this week with two events, the likes of which have made it an Upper West Side institution. On March 20 at 8, "Selected Shorts," one of the city's finest reading series, returns. The inaugural show features the actors Alec Baldwin and James Naughton, along with the cabaret luminary Mary Cleere Haran, reading short pieces about New York City by Colson Whitehead, Mary Gordon, and E. B. White. The following Saturday, March 23, starting at 11 A.M., Symphony Space presents "Wall to Wall Richard Rodgers." Highlights of the free twelve-hour program include appearances by the vocalists KT Sullivan, Nora York, Maureen McGovern, and Haran, along with performances by such jazz musicians as the pianist Fred Hersch. (Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)

MORE READINGS
March 25 at 8: David Mamet offers selections from his new, unpublished play, "Dr. Faustus," along with a work in progress and a nonfiction piece about Vermont. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500.) ♦ March 25 at 8: The actress Zoe Caldwell reads from her autobiography, "I Will Be Cleopatra." (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 311 W. 43rd St. 399-3030.)

TALK
March 23 at 3: Peter Kurth, the author of "Isadora: A Sensational Life," and Lori Belilove, a dancer and the founder of the Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation, discuss the great barefoot one. (Bruno Walter Auditorium, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center. 642-0142.)

courtesy of the BVI Tourist Board

PRESCRIPTION FOR RECOVERY

Hedonism in the Caribbean islands knows no bounds.

luxe living

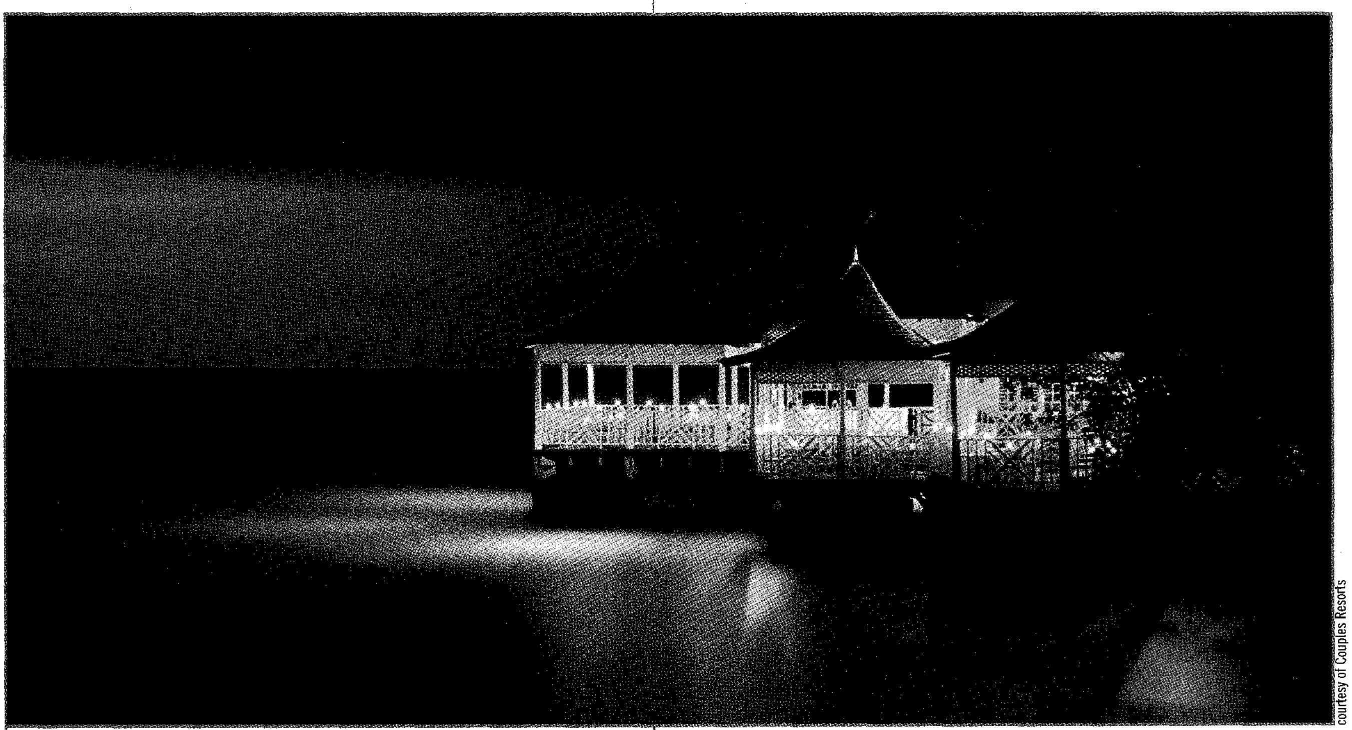
BY JESSICA HARRIS

It's that time of year when the holiday season seems a distant memory and summer vacation is too far ahead to be on my radar screen. I'm strafed and frazzled, and like most folks in Gotham, I need a break. Looking no farther than my map of the Caribbean, I try to pick out a spot where I can indulge in my favorite deadly sins: sloth and gluttony.

I recall my first Caribbean jaunt. Back in the days when few were venturing to Jamaica, some chums and I rented a villa there and headed off. Arrival was painless, and we were whisked by our chauffeur cum gardener to a multi-bedroomed house high on a hill overlooking a verdant fairway. It came with a pool, as well as a helper and a cook. We spent lazy days alternating between dips in the pool, rounds of golf, and even more rounds of mind-numbing rum punch—a heady experience indeed for a first-year teaching fellow. That foray was shortly followed by a midwinter trip to Haiti, and an excursion to Barbados for a pampering stay at Cobbler's Cove and my first taste of chicken from Baxter's Road. In the ensuing decades I've learned that when March winds blow, it's time for a bit of luxurious indulgence in my life.

Luxury, though, is an elusive commodity. Although traditionally conjuring up everything from big cars to fancy hotels that cater handsomely to one's every desire, luxury is strictly a different-strokes-for-different-folks sort of a thing. Some prefer tennis 24/7. Others can't relax without a five-iron in hand, and still others crave spirited horseback rides along the surf while the sun slips past the horizon. For me, luxury has always meant more than a hot-stone massage and a pedicure. Indulging in endless walks along the beach, exploring a small museum to discover a piece of arcane local history, or simply catching up on the growing pile of books next to my bed are more up my alley. Luxury also means eating well, and often, and just basking in the warmth of a culture other than my own, where the smiles on the faces I pass along the street are spontaneous and unforced. But whatever the prescription for recovery, the Caribbean offers something for virtually every luxury seeker.

And it's fitting that my first taste of Caribbean hedonism came while living in a Jamaican villa. This sort of indulgence remains a prime regional lure today, and one that is amply catered to by the folks at **LaCure** (888-4LaCURE), a Canadian-based villa-rental outfit. LaCure has been sending folks off on villa jaunts since 1979, and a visit to their Web site is a revelation. With a selection of more than six hundred villas worldwide, with many in the Caribbean, LaCure offers something for every hedonist.



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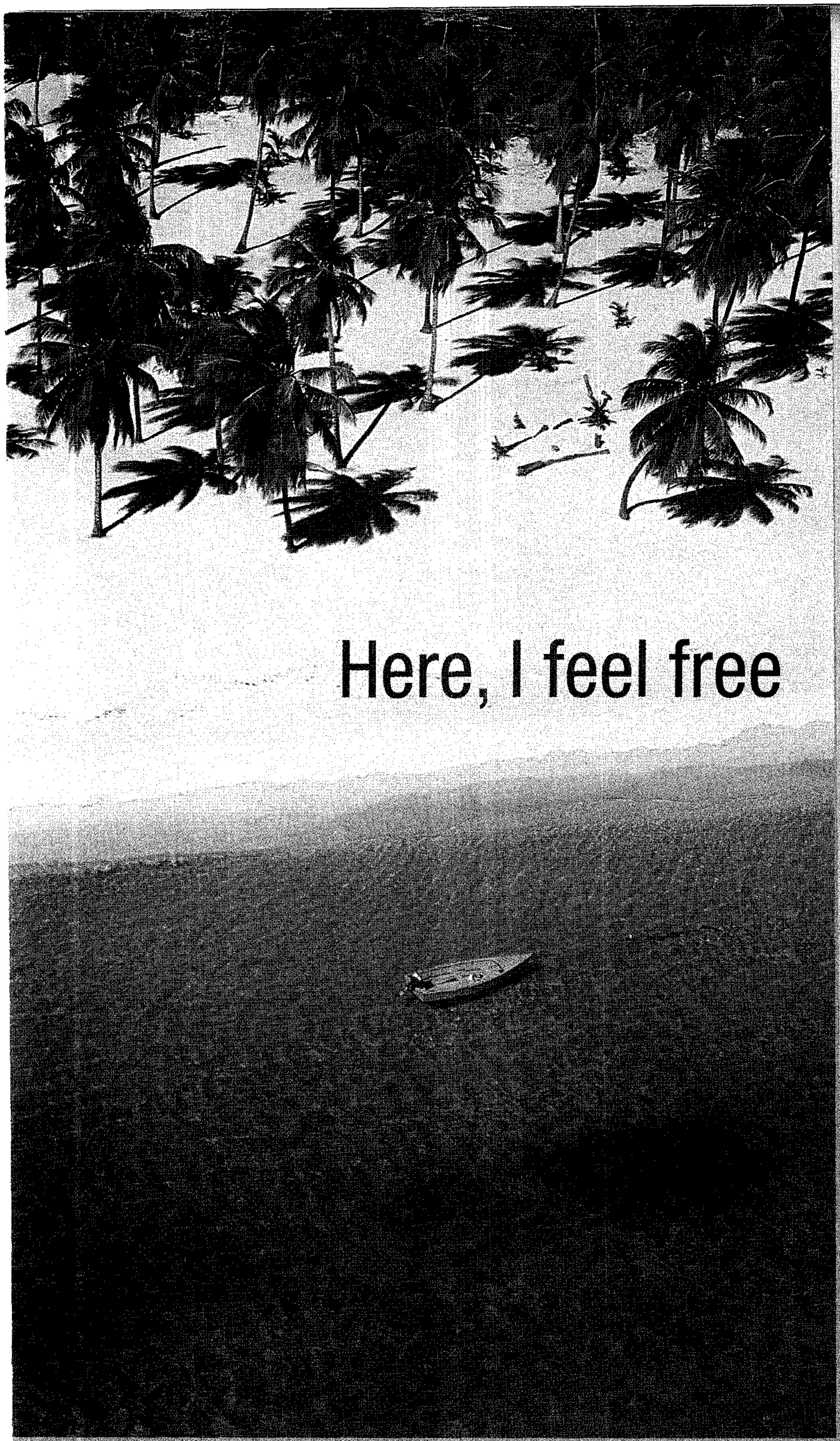
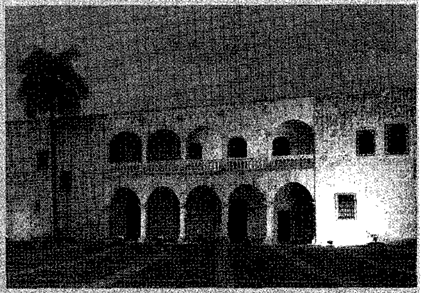
THE ARTFUL CHOICE

The hardest part for most travellers is choosing which villa to rent. There's **Roaring Pavilion Villa & Spa** (703-234-3340) near Ocho Rios in Jamaica. Perfect for film buffs, it sits on a curve of beach where the Roaring River meets the Caribbean Sea. (This was where Ursula Andress emerged from the surf to greet Sean Connery in the James Bond thriller "Dr. No.") The villa, which has been a home away from home for a number of Hollywood luminaries, boasts four master suites, a lagoon-style



GRUPO TENDER 2002



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the joy of our people,
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The **Dominican**Republic
a land of sensations

pool, a gym, and an outdoor spa (treatments are included in the rental price). Mahogany Hill is a five-bedroom villa at Jamaica's Tryall Golf, Beach, & Tennis Club, offering families friction-free downtime. It comes complete with a Jamaican nanny and a children's play cottage filled with toys, games, and kid-friendly videos. A full staff is provided as well, along with a private pool, satellite television, and a nearby beach. Or you can wile away the hours deciding among villas in St. James like the Oliver Messel-designed **Crystal Springs** (246-422-2618) on the sea in Barbados, or the Moorish-styled **Serena** (800-942-6725) in St. Martin with views of Baie Rouge and Anguilla on the horizon, or Barbados' super-deluxe **L'Oasis** (800-942-6725) with a French chef on hand to prepare every meal.

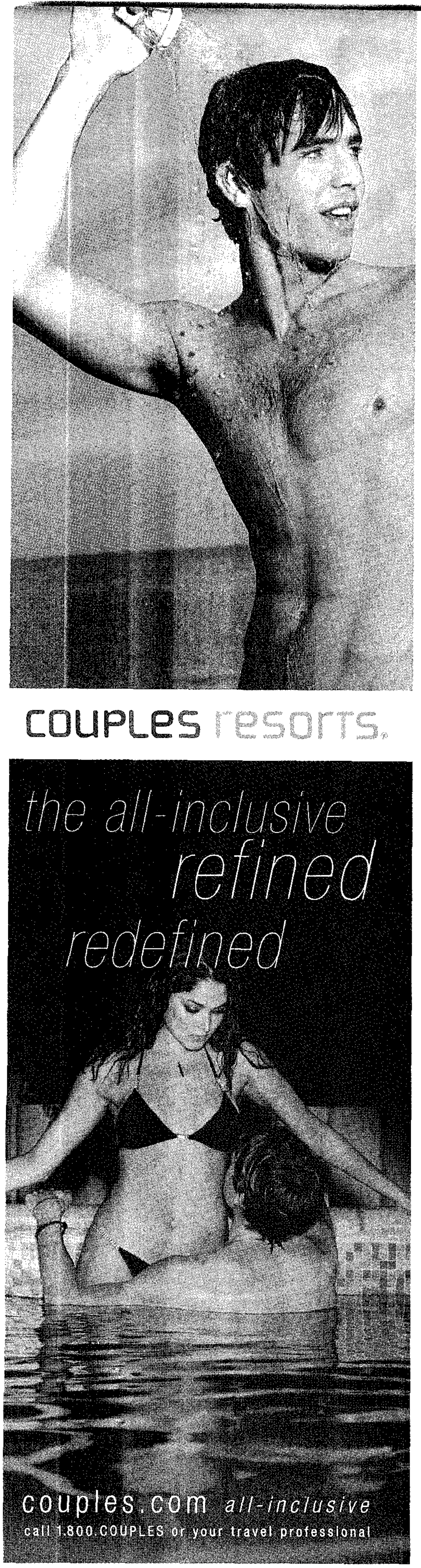
Villas are only one option for getting away in style. Sometimes there's nothing like the pampering offered by a well-run hostelry. **Tryall Golf, Beach, & Tennis Club** (800-238-5290) is one of the region's classics. The 2,200-acre plantation offers fifty-six individually designed and decorated villas ranging from two to six bedrooms. It also offers accommodations in the nineteenth-century Great House—the hub of the resort's activities. Villa guests drop in for afternoon tea at four or to reconnect with the world on the Internet. There's a tennis center where inveterate racketeers can indulge in all of the tennis they want. For parents with children aged five to twelve, Tryall's Kids Club affords parents the absolute luxury of time alone. Children delight in the club's supervised nature walks, talent shows, and lessons in Jamaican patois, which keep them enthusiastically stimulated. Veteran golfers need no introduction to the eighteen-hole championship course that has played host to the Johnny Walker and Mazda tournaments, and is one of the region's finest.

courtesy of the Hotel Kura Hulanda

DUTCH TREAT
The Kurá Hulanda (Papiamento for courtyard) is centrally located in Willemstad's Colonial district.

For history buffs, Curaçao's **Hotel Kurá Hulanda** (888-660-2225) offers a hundred rooms in an eight-block complex that includes an institute for anthropological studies, a conference center, and a museum that presents the African diaspora in all of its diverse facets. Located in Curaçao's Dutch Colonial district (a UNESCO World Heritage site), the property is part the brainchild of Dutch entrepreneur Jacob Gelt Dekker, who has adroitly combined up-to-the-minute modernity with the burnished images of the past.

Sometimes, simply savoring the joys of a party with congenial folks and good conversation is bliss enough. Revelers will find no better way to kickback than at **Bomba's Surfside** (284-495-4148), a shack on the beach at Cappoon's Bay on Tortola in the British Virgin Islands. Pick your dates carefully because the legendary beach bar hosts a monthly full moon party featuring live music all night long, rivers of rum and beer, and animated camaraderie which alone is worth the trip.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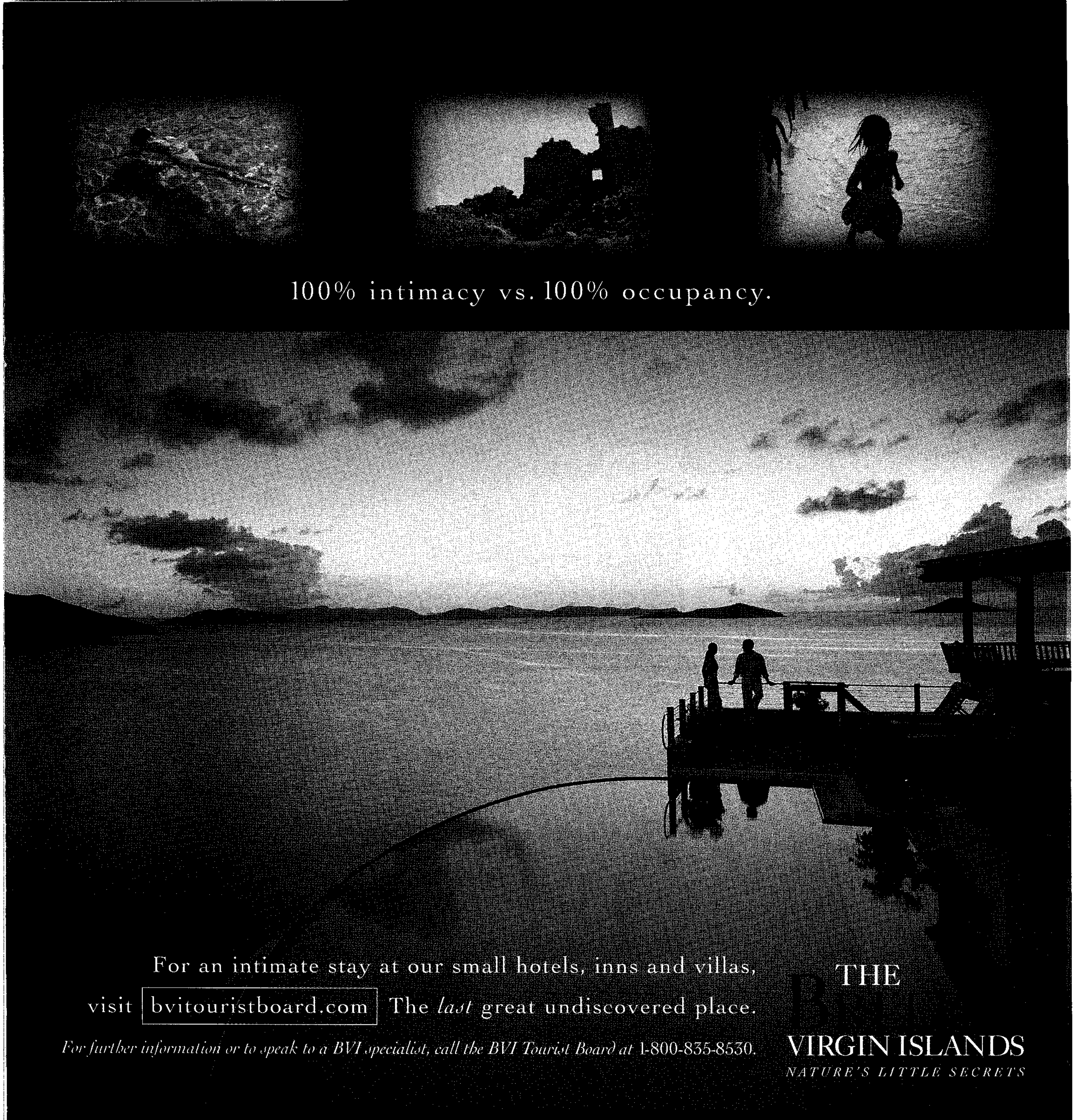
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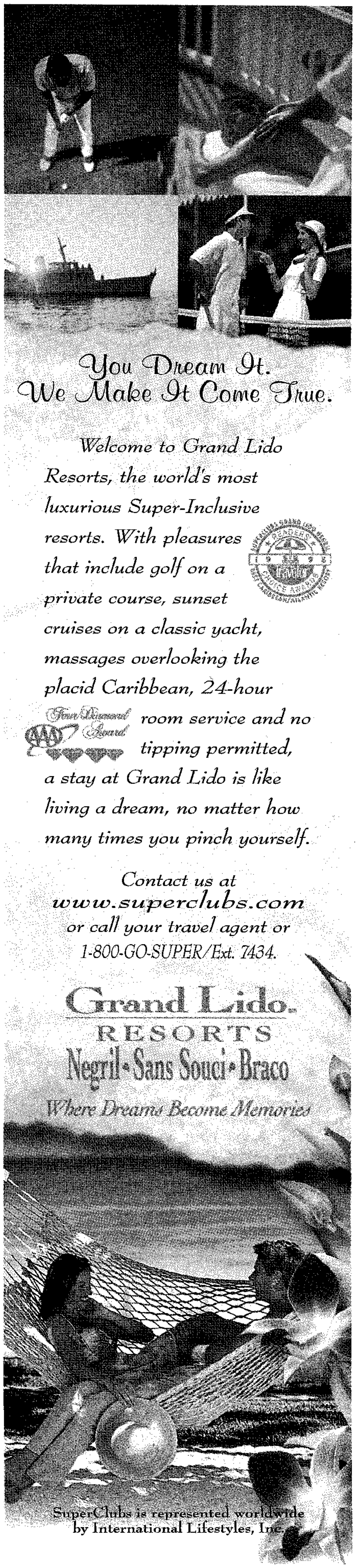
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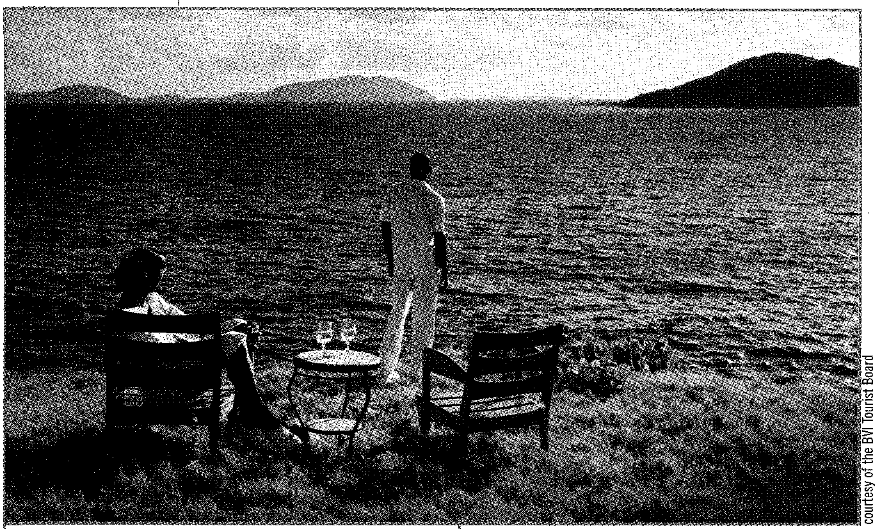
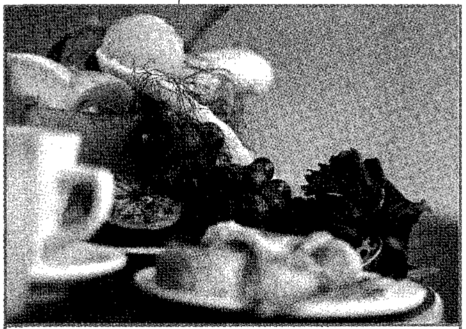
MATTERS CULINARY

The nearby **Sugar Mill** hotel (800-462-8834) is run by Caribbean cookbook writers Jinx and Jeff Morgan, both U.S. citizens. Guest cottages are scattered over the hillside—all within reach of the swimming pool—and there's a beach just across the road. The award-winning restaurant in a seventeenth-century sugar mill serves dishes prepared by the couple, who are not only well-acquainted with the region's finest, but who compose their own creations too.

For many of us, eating well is the perfect antidote to stress. And for those with a penchant for epicurean extravagance, the **Grand Lido Negril** (800-GO SUPER) in Jamaica, is superb. Executive chef Martin Maginley and his kitchen turn out multicultural wonders like salmon pastrami and seafood strudel (shrimp, scallops, braised leeks, and more). Maginley's able way with a whisk has won him a gold medal at the Caribbean Culinary Federation's Taste of the Caribbean competition. Recently "chef of the show" at the Jamaican Cultural Development Commission's Professional Culinary Arts Competition, Maginley is indisputably one of the region's chefs to watch.


courtesy of the BVI Tourist Board

TRANQUIL PLEASURES
Of BVI's thirty-six islands, only sixteen are inhabited.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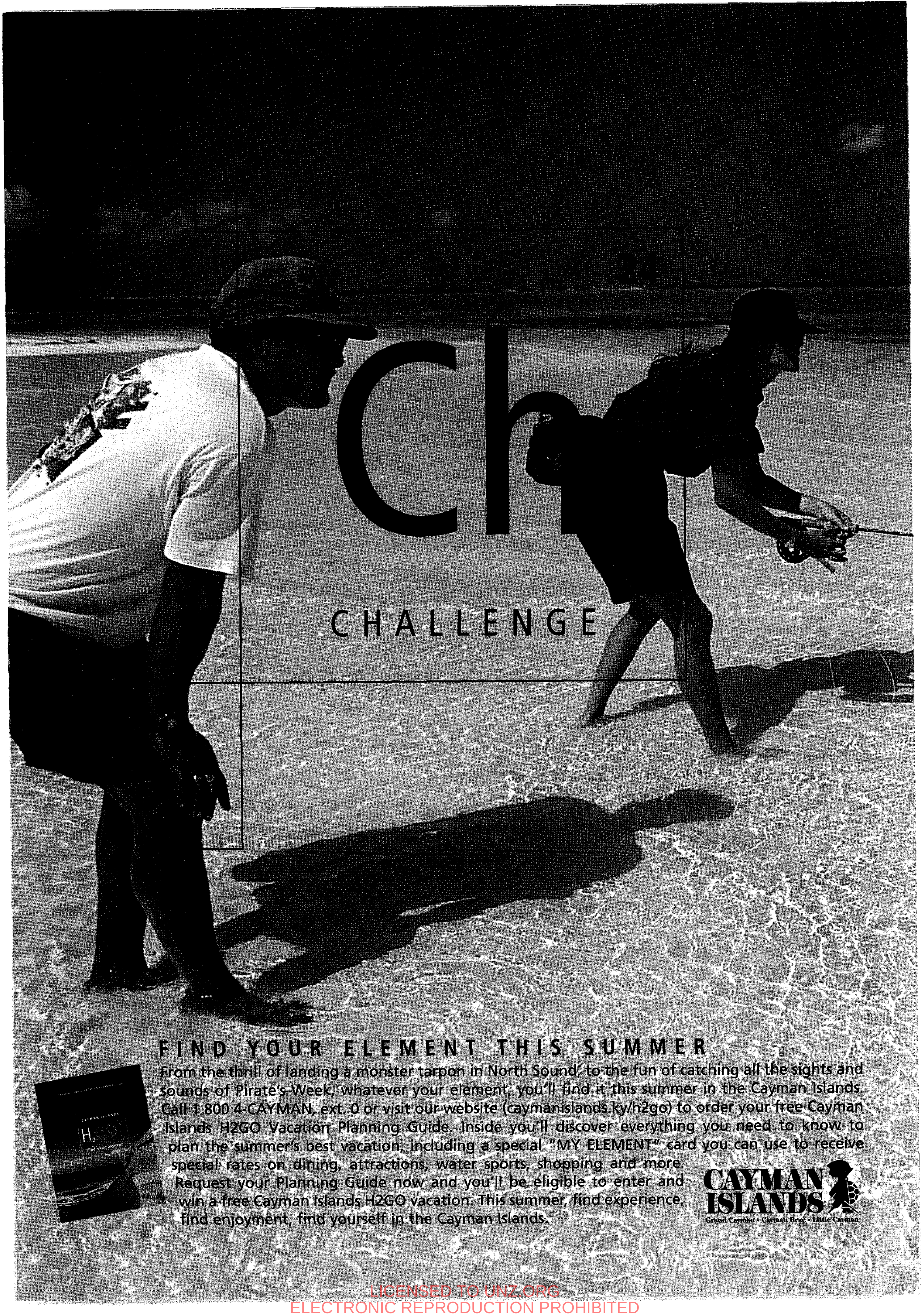
Nowhere in the world is the bounty more luscious.

The small, but oh so very elegant **Horned Dorset Primavera** (800-633-1857) in Rincón, Puerto Rico, with its antique-filled rooms sans phones, radios, and TVs, can transport you away from it all. Extraordinary cuisine is one way the owners personalize this unique hotel, which exudes an air of cossetted luxury. Cordon Bleu-trained chef Aaron Wratten astounds guests nightly with dishes like king crab leg and frisée salad, avocado mousse and passion fruit glaze, and pumpkin soup with nutmeg cream. Every night brings a tropical menu, a Provençal menu, and a chef's tasting menu.



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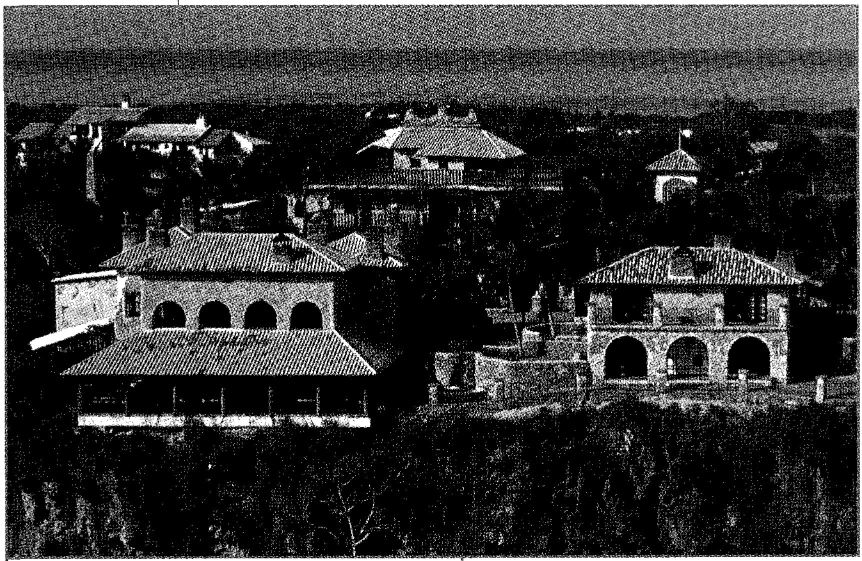
POSTMARK caribbean

SEAFARING HAVENS

Many feel adrift in the Caribbean without the gentle rocking of a boat underfoot or the experience of being lulled to rest by the rhythmic slapping of wind against furled sails. The Grenadines and British Virgin Islands have long catered to this crowd. Now, **Casa de Campo** (800-877-3643) in the Dominican Republic offers mates a haven at its new marina and yacht club. With fifty boat slips currently available out of a planned 183, vessels up to 165 feet can be accommodated and the slips come equipped with electricity and cable TV hookups. On-site customs and immigration officials simplify entry into the country. Once cleared, visitors have access to a concierge to work through any problems. Office amenities are provided, as well as passes that permit access to all of the resort's sports and facilities. The lure of *la vida Dominicana* is sure to make this the hot mooring site on the Caribbean sailing map.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LA VIDA DOMINICANA
At the lush playground of Casa de Campo in the Dominican Republic, time is the ultimate luxury.

courtesy of The Cayman Islands Department of Tourism

IDYLLIC ESCAPE
No shortage of ways to chill in The Cayman Islands.

In this increasingly whirring, buzzing, and jangling world, being without phones and faxes, pagers and E-mails, is almost a forgotten pleasure. Combine this with sunshine, soft breezes, bathtub-warm seas, and pristine beaches—like those on Grand Cayman's Cayman Kai, Water Cay, and Rum Point, or Little Cayman's Point o' Sand, where residents head when they want to escape the tourist hordes—and you have the idyllic getaway. Pack a picnic lunch and a flask of rum punch and savor the unspoiled peace and calm. For those more athletically inclined, **Couples Swept Away** (800-COUPLES) in Negril offers a full fitness evaluation as well as a schedule of power walks, aerobics, body-sculpting, private couples' massage, and yoga as part of its all-inclusive package that also covers golf and tennis. Such hedonism ensures that you will return home with the knots in your spine removed and the stress furrows smoothed out of your brow. Hotel and villa rental rates in the Caribbean traditionally are reduced from April 15th through the end of June. Plan to travel during those dates and you might find yourself saving enough to start planning 2003's Caribbean mid-year break as well.

(Jessica Harris is a professor, restaurant reviewer, and food historian with a specialty in the cuisine of the African diaspora.)

NEWS BRIEFS

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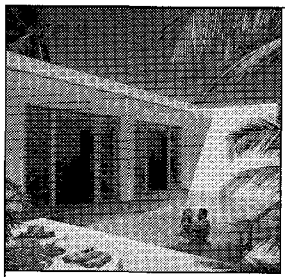

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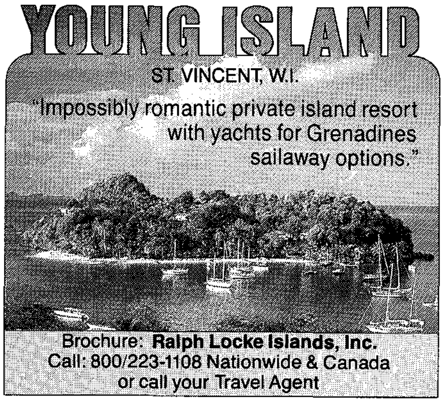

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MOVIES OPENING

BLADE II
Wesley Snipes returns to his role as a vampire-hunting superhero in this sequel directed by Guillermo del Toro ("The Devil's Backbone"). Opening March 22.

E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL: THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY
Reviewed this week in A Critic at Large. Opening March 22.

JIM BROWN: ALL AMERICAN
Spike Lee directed this documentary about the N.F.L. running back and Hollywood star. Opening March 22. (Film Forum.)

MARGARITA HAPPY HOUR
A drama about a group of young, bohemian New York women who meet every week at a Mexican restaurant to discuss motherhood and other topics. Written and directed by Ilya Chaiken. Opening March 22. (Cinema Village.)

SON OF THE BRIDE
An Argentinean film about a put-upon middle-aged man (Ricardo Darín) who reunites with a childhood friend and decides to change his life. Juan José Campanella directed. In Spanish. Opening March 22.

SORORITY BOYS
When three college seniors get kicked out of their fraternity, they dress up as girls and join a sorority in this teen comedy directed by Wallace Wolodarsky. Opening March 22.

STOLEN SUMMER
Pete Jones, the winner of the "Project Greenlight" contest, directed this drama about two boys, one Catholic, one Jewish, who are searching for a way to get to heaven. With Aidan Quinn, Bonnie Hunt, and Kevin Pollak. Opening March 22.

VERY ANNIE MARY
A comedy set in a village in South Wales, with Rachel Griffiths as an awkward baker's daughter who dreams of becoming an opera singer. Sara Sugarman wrote and directed. Opening March 22.

FILM NOTES

AMÉLIE
A waifish Parisienne discovers her mission in life: to bring unexpected happiness to others, and so to herself. Such is the story of Amélie (Audrey Tautou), and the simplicity of it—not to mention its dangerous surfeit of sweetness—appears to have touched a universal nerve. (In truth, the saga of the movie's success is more telling than anything in the movie itself.) Tautou is clearly a find, although one wonders what Mathieu Kassovitz, who plays the object of her affection, made of his role; it was Kassovitz who, in 1995, yanked French cinema up to date with his baring of ethnic hostilities in "La Haine." The Paris of this new movie lies at the other extreme, although what nags at you most is not the neighborly charm but the itchy, unsettled manner of the director, Jean-Pierre Jeunet. How far should we trust a plea for benevolence when it feels like a box of tricks? In French.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/5/01.) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, and 34th Street Theatre.)

A BEAUTIFUL MIND
If you think the title stinks, try the movie. Russell Crowe plays John Nash, a real-life mathematician whose most radical work was produced in his early twenties and who shared the 1994 Nobel Prize for Economics at the age of sixty-six. In between lay years of darkness, during which Nash was assailed by paranoid schizophrenia. When it comes to the delicate matter of his delusions, this earnest movie, written by Akiva Goldsman and directed by Ron Howard, pulls a flagrant scam: whole characters and episodes are presented as urgently authentic, only to be revealed as figments of a cracked imagination. Crowe pulls out the stops, but he looks too bullish and controlled for such a pitiable victim. The movie grinds on forever until it bumps into redemption; the best reason to stay with it is Jennifer Connelly, who smolders and suffers to perfection as Nash's weary wife. Math skills not required.—*A.L.* (1/7/02) (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

40 DAYS AND 40 NIGHTS
Matt (Josh Hartnett), a San Francisco Web designer from a Catholic family, gets dumped by his glamorous girlfriend and decides to swear off sex for Lent. Tripping and falling all over the place, his eyes brimming with panic, Hartnett throws himself into the performance physically and some of his corkscrew desperation is funny. But the director, Michael Lehmann, allows the actor to repeat himself a lot, perhaps because the screenwriter, Robert Perez, hasn't written enough for the character. Who is this guy? It's not so much sex that Matt seems eager to avoid as it is speech, and, after a while, he just seems like a dope who has committed himself to a meaningless stunt. The movie is set among allegedly hip San Francisco people in their twenties, but the sensibility is naggingly adolescent.—*David Denby* (3/11/02) (Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

GOSFORD PARK
This Agatha Christie-style houseparty murder mystery, set in 1932, plants itself deep into social reality and achieves the kind of candor about class and sex that Christie would never have been capable of. The brilliant screenplay was written by Julian Fellowes. Robert Altman directs an enormous cast with lightness and speed and a masterly ability to pull the many little pieces of intrigue together into a coherent whole. Casually, the movie chronicles the end of the rigid British class system and the liberation of the working class through popular entertainment. The once-in-a-lifetime cast includes Michael Gambon, Kristin Scott Thomas, Maggie Smith, Jeremy Northam, and Charles Dance as the swells, and Helen Mirren, Eileen Atkins, Alan Bates, Clive Owen, and Emily Watson as the servants.—*D.D.* (1/14/02) (Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

HARP OF BURMA
Kon Ichikawa's wrenching 1956 epic of atonement is set right after the end of the Second World War. A Japanese soldier—beloved for his expert playing of a Burmese harp during his regiment's group sings—receives orders to persuade another unit still fighting in the mountains to surrender. He fails, but survives the slaughter of the troop; after a Buddhist priest nurses him back to health, he steals the priest's robe and journeys to the P.O.W. camp where his regiment awaits repatriation. Along the way, he decides he can't leave behind the thousands of Japanese corpses still strewn around the countryside. With the harp as his only relic of his earlier identity, he takes on the role of monk and goes about burying the dead. The movie is not just about the atrocities of war but also about finding a valid response to them. The music lends the action its bitter poignancy—and leads to a certain dramatic attenuation. But if the picture is overlong, it's also overwhelming. In Japanese.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; March 22.)

JOHN Q.
When his young son needs a heart transplant and his insurance won't cover the operation, a Chicago machinist (Denzel Washington) takes a prominent surgeon (James Woods) and a number of patients hostage, threatening to kill his captives if his son doesn't get a new ticker. This tearjerker, written by James Kearns and directed by Nick Cassavetes, is a trashy, opportunistic work that appears to have been intentionally pitched low in order to rouse an audience that the filmmakers view as politically somnolent. They may have calculated correctly: the movie is badly written, directed, and acted, yet the people in the theatre, fed up with the health-care system, seem alive to the picture and shout back at the screen.—*D.D.* (3/4/02) (84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

LAST ORDERS
A gang of three Englishmen, in various states of decline, gather to mourn a fourth, an East London butcher and veteran of the Second World War. Fred Schepisi's careful movie, adapted from Graham Swift's prize-winning novel, has a tricky, deck-shuffling structure, with past and present chopping repeatedly into one another; you may warm to this layering, though you could also argue that Schepisi is trying too hard to deepen a dangerously simple tale. The issue here is a friendship that survives the dwindling of a nation; we pass from an England proudly at war to the weary confines of a pub. The pals are played by David Hemmings, Tom Courtenay, Bob Hoskins, and, filling the dead man's shoes, Michael Caine. Some of their backchat has an oddly studied air—what would the film have felt like if Schepisi had allowed them to improvise? With Helen Mirren as the non-merry widow, and the unabashed Kelly Reilly as her younger self.—*A.L.* (2/18 & 25/02) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

MARYAM
Set during the hostage crisis of 1979, this drama portrays the my-so-called-life of a young Jersey girl of Iranian descent (played beautifully by Mariam Parris). At school, Maryam faces bias from classmates; at home, she attempts to wriggle out from under her strict parents. When her Muslim cousin arrives from their homeland, the culture clash becomes more serious, and the film evokes the patriotism of the Americans and the revolutionary idealism of the Iranians. Both begin to seem misguided. Ramin Serry, the writer-director, keeps the story buoyant with frivolous touches, and he ultimately succeeds in gracefully depicting a troubled time.—*Bruce Diones* (Village East Cinemas.)

MONSOON WEDDING
Mira Nair's new picture has been hailed as a feel-good spree, but it's better than that—a barely stable compound of the wounding, the confusing, and the appealing. The action takes place in Delhi, where a pair of middle-class parents (Lillete Dubey and Naseeruddin Shah) work themselves into a froth over the nuptials of their daughter (Vasundhara Das). Her marriage is, of course, arranged; for all the racket and buzz of the film's modernity, it finds time to make the suggestion—bewildering, perhaps, to audiences here—that from this archaic arrangement can spring an enduring love. The groom is flying in from Houston, Texas; another relative travels from Australia, and you brace yourself for the cultural collisions. The result is a comedy, but only just. India's stressful poise between orthodoxy and innovation (listen for the clash of peacock and cell phone) leads to a devastating family fracture that is only half-healed by the celebrations at the end. In English and Hindi.—*A.L.* (2/18 & 25/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Paris, Sunshine Cinema, and 34th Street Theatre.)

PIERROT LE FOU
Jean-Luc Godard's unresolved, disturbing film: it gets to you. The narrative encompasses a satire of advertising, an existential stalemate, political violence, and romance, all shot—in color—in a hard-edged style. With Jean-Paul Belmondo as Ferdi-

nand, who leaves his rich wife in Paris and goes off to the South of France with the restless Marianne (Anna Karina); he comes to an unforgettably explosive end. Also with Jimmy Karoubi as the dwarf, Samuel Fuller as himself, and a glimpse of Jean-Pierre Léaud. Originally released in 1965. In French.—*Pauline Kael* (BAM Rose Cinemas; March 22-24.)

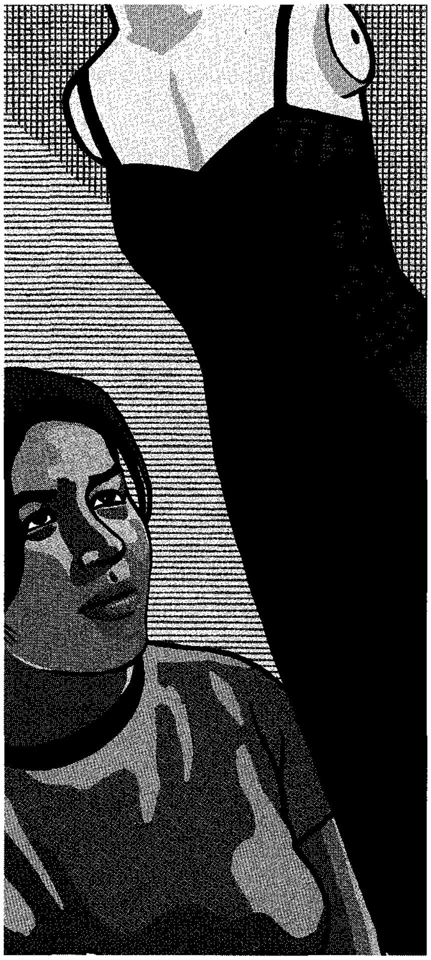
QUEEN OF THE DAMNED
The late, great R. & B. singer Aaliyah makes her appearance about halfway through this bloodless vampire chronicle based on Anne Rice's wacky novel. Stuart Townsend plays Lestat, the night stalker who awakens the Queen from her slumber with garish rock tunes. The whole film is a swishy, rococo howl—too humorless to be camp (although most of the cast puts on a hysterical Transylvanian accent) and dull beyond reason.—*B.D.* (42nd Street E Walk and Union Square.)

SCRATCH
It started simply enough: in 1975, Theodore Livingston (a.k.a. GrandWizzard Theodore) was playing music in his Bronx River Houses apartment when his mom yelled at him to turn it down; he grabbed the record with his hand and heard a scratchy noise that sounded kind of cool. Starting from this mythic zero hour, Doug Pray's enthusiastic homage to d.j.s follows the evolution of scratching from an accident to an art form. In its current state, scratching requires an absurd dexterity and a love for mind-melting sonic distortions. One practitioner, Mix Master Mike, tells of a night when he was so freaked out by the sounds emanating from his turntables that he believed he was communicating with intergalactic beings. His story, along with those of other influential turntablists, makes for a rough-sketch history of a style that's now being co-opted by footwear and soft-drink ads.—*Michael Agger* (Sunshine Cinema.)

SHOWTIME
Eddie Murphy, betraying his "Beverly Hills Cop" past, and Robert De Niro, continuing his comedic career swing, send up the buddy-cop movie. Although they click well in a few scenes, they're no Starsky and Hutch. After a botched drug bust, they get picked for a reality television show ("The Real World" meets "Cops"), and the script devotes a lot of time to the underwhelming observation that we act differently when we're on camera. Much of the humor is too self-referential—jokes with footnotes—and the whole production feels a bit half-hearted. The thugs are the movie's only real triumph: hirsute, club-hopping Eastern Europeans with guns that shoot bullets the size of soda cans.—*M.A.* (Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE SON'S ROOM
The Italian director Nanni Moretti has delved into his darkest material to date and come up with his best film; even here, amazing to report, his customary lightness of touch has not deserted him. Moretti himself stars as a psychiatrist, Giovanni, who is married to the calm and adoring Paola (Laura Morante). They have two children (Jasmine Trinca and Giuseppe Sanfelice), one of whom dies, taking with him the dream of a happy family. Moretti's pacing is hard to fault, as he follows the hairline cracks that widen into gulfs and leave the household looking isolated and loveless. As a case study, the movie adds little to the archives of grief, and rightly so; Moretti is simply drawing up his own distinctively colored map of familiar terrain. In its sharp-etched way, this is no less comic than Moretti's other work, and, for all its sophistication, the comedy is of the primitive kind—that of continuing to live (to jog, to cook, to go to school) when the reason to live has fallen from your hands. In Italian.—*A.L.* (2/4/02) (Village East Cinemas.)

STORYTELLING
Another disturbance of the peace from the writer-director Todd Solondz, who made "Welcome to the Dollhouse" and "Happiness." This time, we get a movie split in half, the first part of which concerns a creative-writing student (Selma Blair), thin and white, who dumps her disabled boyfriend and, for good measure, sleeps with her black professor. In the second half, we trace the exploits of a documentary filmmaker (Paul Giamatti) who wants to unearth what the youth of today are doing with themselves in high school. The answer is, more or less, nothing, although we do come across one slacker who would like to be on TV. In short, Solondz presents two tales meant to winkle out the cultural encounters that embarrass us the most, and then twists the knife and leaves us squirming harder than before. It's clever enough, and you could gash yourself on some of the lines, but, when a director is as resolutely ungenerous as Solondz, the end can only come as a relief.—*A.L.* (2/4/02) (Angelika Film Center.)



"Real Women Have Curves" opens the "New Directors/New Films" festival at MOMA on March 22.

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS
For several years, Tony Curtis had been a virtual guarantor of box-office success, and the New York locations for this 1957 film were invaded by thousands of teen-agers, who broke through police barricades to get to their idol. But these throngs ignored the completed picture, in which Curtis grew up into an actor and gave what will probably be remembered as the best performance of his career. Even the presence of that other box-office guarantor, Burt Lancaster, did not lift the picture from the red ink. This is understandable, because the movie is a slice of perversity—a study of dollar and power worship, with Lancaster as a Broadway gossip columnist and Curtis as an ingratiating, blackmailing press agent. Clifford Odets never came through more pungently as a screenwriter; his distinctively idiomatic dialogue generally seems like bad poetry when it's spoken from the screen, but here it's harshly expressive and taut. The director, Alexander Mackendrick, has a crisp film-noir style: the production is shaped by a zest for the corrupt milieu, the pulsating big-city life (what used to be called "the symphony of a city")—the streets, the night clubs, the cynical types, the noise and desperation.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; March 15-19.)

THE TIME MACHINE
In the future, we'll all be listening to Enya. The dyspeptic novel by H. G. Wells about a Victorian inventor who dabbles in time travel gets a New Age makeover courtesy of his great-grandson, the director Simon Wells. As Alexander Hartdegen, Guy Pearce does an admirable job of keeping a straight face, and his rides in the time machine are astonishing special effects displays. One set piece—a triple-time morphing of nineteenth-century Manhattan into our skyscraper era—could be shown at the Hayden Planetarium. Even the improbable leaps of logic and the bland, international English dialogue don't really dampen the fun. It's when Pearce arrives in the future and discovers the Eloi (sort of like the Anasazi, except they're really into bamboo) that the race and class issues get an awkward, cringe-inducing treatment. Still, it's worth sticking around just to see Jeremy Irons as the Uber-Morlock.—*M.A.* (Chelsea West, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

WE WERE SOLDIERS
A bloody piece of hero worship devoted to an ideal commander—Lieutenant Colonel Harold Moore (Mel Gibson)—and to fighting and dying in the right way. The training is bruising, the leadership inspired, the wives as supportive as deeply rooted oaks. In 1965, early in the war in Vietnam, Moore leads units of the Army's Seventh Cavalry against a much larger North Vietnamese force. Mel Gibson is leathery but quick and alert, his eyes darting this way and that. When he runs around from one part of the perimeter to another, his M-16 blazing, the movie is exciting in a rudimentary, gung-ho way. The writer-director Randall Wallace stages much of the combat at very close range, with masses of North Vietnamese infantry hurling themselves against American riflemen. Recapitulating the many pictures made in the forties and fifties which portrayed the Americans as good and simple people fighting for a just cause, Wallace and Gibson have taken Vietnam out of history—essentially, they have assimilated it into the Second World War.—*D.D.* (3/11/02) (84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

Y TU MAMÁ TAMBIÉN
A new movie from the Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón, who came to Hollywood to make "A Little Princess" and "Great Expectations" and who has now returned in triumph to his homeland. The story is a stripped-down road movie: two teen-age friends, one rich (Diego Luna) and one poor (Gael García Bernal), borrow a car and set off to find the perfect beach, in the company of a Spanish woman (Maribel Verdú) who is not merely older, but married. Plus, she seems inexplicably happy to take either, or both, of them to bed. All the boys' dreams, in other words, have come true, and they can hardly handle it. What ensues is a sad and sexy picaresque, as everyone's illusions are peeled off along with their clothes. Cuarón's style is so open and relaxed, and his actors are so attuned to one another, that not until the final scene, with its litany of revelations, do we see that what felt life-affirming has also been a meditation on the slide of time, and on the offstage presence of death. Unrated, and therefore full of proper sex, with all the improprieties intact. In Spanish.—*A.L.* (3/18/02) (Lincoln Plaza, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

ALSO PLAYING

ICE AGE
Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia I and II, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.

IN THE BEDROOM (11/26/01)
Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, and 34th Street Theatre.

IRIS
Cinema 2, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.

LANTANA
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Quad Cinema, and Sutton 1 and 2.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING (12/24 & 31/01)
Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 3, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.

MONSTER'S BALL
Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, 72nd Street East, Sunshine Cinema, and Village East Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600).
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

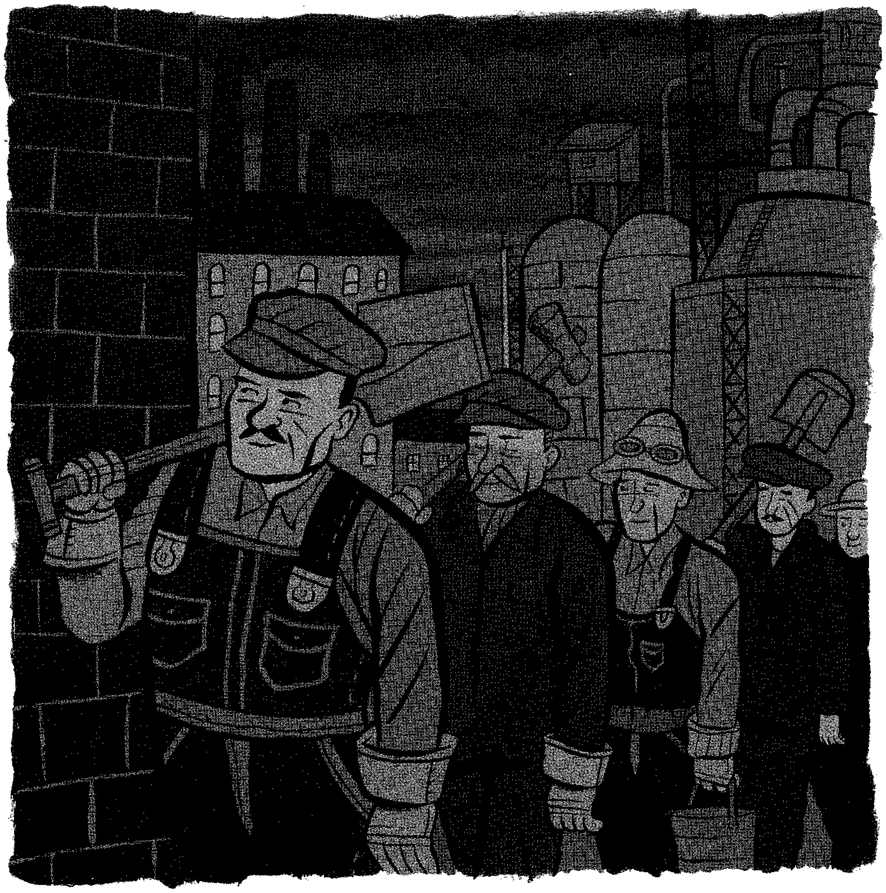
AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through March 31: "New York, New York," films selected by the New York Film Critics Circle. March 23 at 2: "The Warriors" (1979, Walter Hill). ♦ March 23 at 4:15: "Mixed Blood" (1985, Paul Morrissey). ♦ March 24 at 2: "Underground Street Films" by Helen Levitt, Ken Jacobs, and others. ♦ March 24 at 4: "Mean Streets" (1973, Martin Scorsese). ♦ Repertory night. March 23-24 at 6:30: "Ran" (1985, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Restored prints of Fritz Lang films. March 21-24: "The Big Heat" (1953). ♦ March 21-24: "Human Desire" (1954).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—March 20 at 6:30 and 9:10: "Jason and the Argonauts" (1963, Don Chaffey). ♦ The films of Jean-Luc Godard and Anna Karina. All films are in French. March 21 at 7: "Made in USA" (1966). ♦ March 22-24 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Pierrot Le Fou" (†). ♦ March 25-26 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Band of Outsiders" (1964).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through March 28 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:40, 7:30, and 9:30: "Sweet Smell of Success" (†).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Films that portray *la vie d'artiste*. March 26 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Violette et Mister B." (2001, Dominique Delouche; in French).



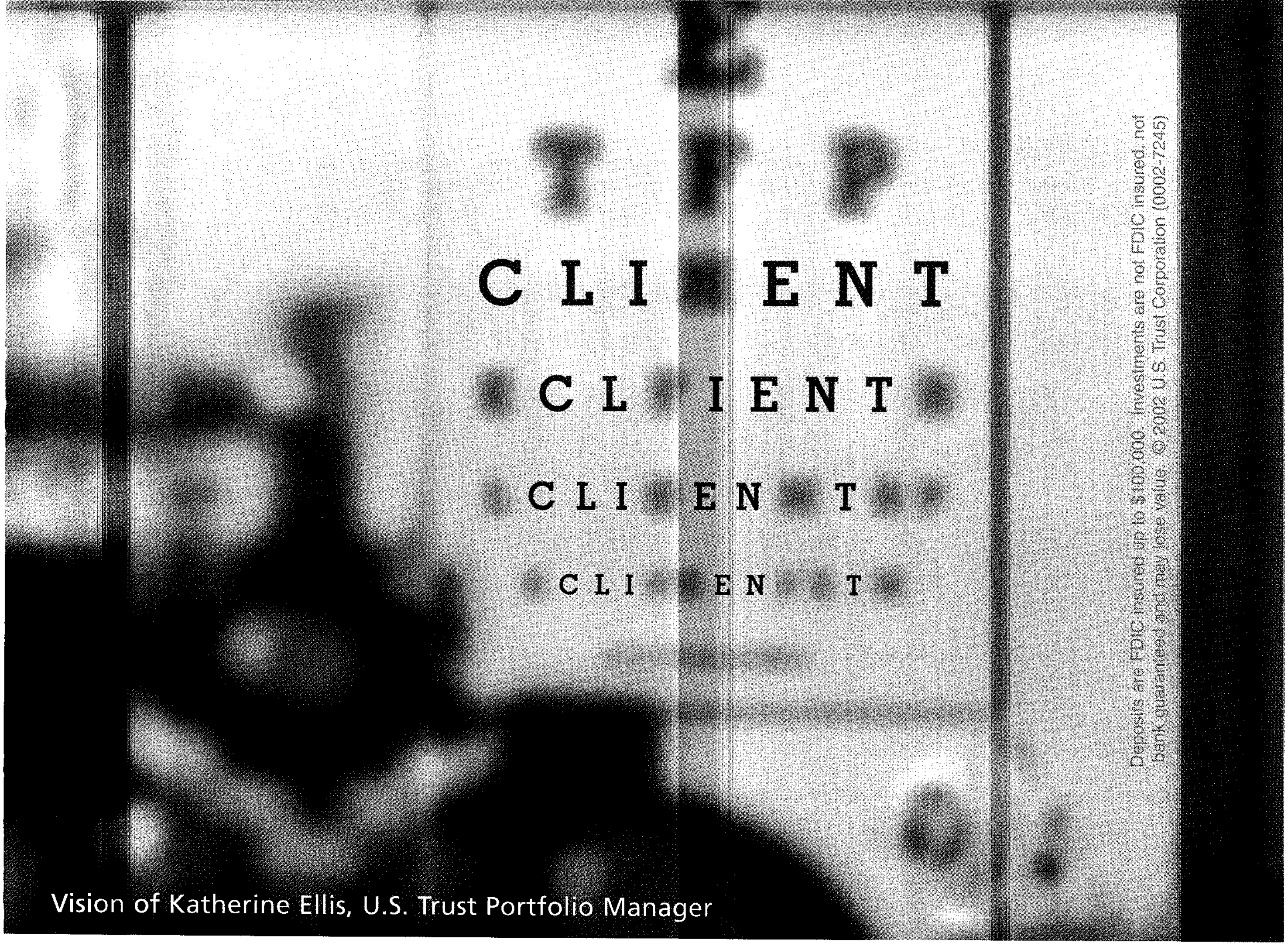
COSMOPOLITAN *In his long and varied career, the filmmaker Joris Ivens documented Stalin's Five-Year Plan in "Komsomol" (above) and Roosevelt's New Deal. A retrospective of Ivens' international œuvre begins March 20 at Walter Reade Theatre.*

SETH

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Recent cinema from Mexico. All films are in Spanish. March 22 at 7: "A Rare World" (2001, Armando Casas). ♦ March 23 at 3: "To and Fro" (2000, Salvador Aguirre). ♦ March 23 at 7: "Perfume de Violetas" (2001, Maryse Sistach).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Starting March 22: "New Directors/New Films." March 22 at 6 and March 23 at 3:30: "Real Women Have Curves" (2002, Patricia Cardosa). ♦ March 22 at 9 and March 23 at 12:30: "Take Care of My Cat" (2001, Jeong Jae-eun; in Korean). ♦ March 23 at 6:30 and March 24 at 4: "Daughter from Danang" (2002, Gail Dolgin and Vicente Franco). ♦ March 23 at 9 and March 24 at 1: "The Mars Canon" (2001, Shiori Kazama; in Japanese). ♦ March 25 at 6 and March 26 at 8:15: "The New Country" (2000, Geir Hansteen Jörgensen; in Swedish). ♦ March 25 at 9:15: "Tirana Year Zero" (2001, Fatmir Koçi; in Albanian). ♦ March 26 at 6: "A Dog's Day" (2001, Murali Nair; in Malayalam). ♦ Through April 5: "Kon Ichikawa: A Reprise." All films are in Japanese. March 21 at 2:30: "Nihonbashi, Bridge of Japan" (1956). ♦ March 21 at 6: "Ten Dark Women" (1961). ♦ March 22 at 1:45: "Harp of Burma" (†). ♦ March 22 at 4: "Fires on the Plain" (1959). ♦ March 25 at 2: "Bonchi" (1960). ♦ March 25 at 4: "Ototo" (1960). ♦ March 26 at 2: "Alone on the Pacific" (1963). ♦ March 26 at 4: "Punishment Room" (1956).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through March 28: "Cinema Without Borders: The Films of Joris Ivens." March 20 at 6:30, March 23 at 5 and 9:30, and March 24 at 9:30: "A Tale of the Wind" (1988; in French). ♦ March 20 at 9, March 21 at 5, March 22 at 2:45, and March 24 at 1: "The Spanish Earth" (1937) and "The 400 Million" (1939). ♦ March 21 at 1 and 7:10 and March 24 at 5:15: "Rain" (1929; in Dutch), "Philips Radio" (1931; in Dutch), and other early works. ♦ March 21 at 3:30 and 9:35, March 22 at 1, and March 24 at 7:45: "Komsomol; or, Song of Heroes" (1932; in Russian) and "Power and the Land" (1941). ♦ March 22 at 5, March 23 at 7:15, and March 26 at 9: "Indonesia Calling" (1946) and "Song of the Rivers" (1954; in German). ♦ March 22 at 7:15, March 24 at 3:15, and March 26 at 1: "The Seine Meets Paris" (1957; in French), ". . . A Valparaíso" (1963; in French), and "Pour le Mistral" (1965; in French). ♦ March 22 at 9:15: "The 17th Parallel" (1968; in French).



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THE NEW YORKER

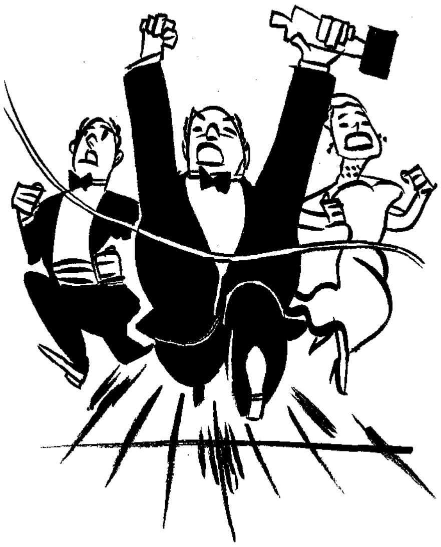
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
BEST PICTURE

In 1989, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, wishing to minimize the wounded feelings that can accompany being tagged a loser, changed the formula by which the envelope-rippers announce the recipients of the Oscars. The federal bureaucracy, always a bit behind the Hollywood curve, took more than a decade to catch up: not until the 2000 election did Washington get around to ditching the old, hurtful custom of having the voters say "And the winner is . . ." and replacing it with a more sensitive practice, whereby a group of chosen judges, wearing gowns that a Price Waterhouse accountant would die for, consult themselves and then announce, "And the Presidency goes to . . ."

For the movie industry, it's been a rough political season. Campaign spending is through the roof. According to one estimate, by the time the polls close on Tuesday the studios will have shelled out a record sixty million dollars for full-page newspaper ads, billboards, videotape and DVD mailings, and other promotional goodies. That may not sound like much—Michael Bloomberg paid more last fall for a four-year lease on City Hall—but it's thirty times the reported production budget for "In the Bedroom," one of the contenders for Best Picture. And the Oscar electorate is a lot smaller than the mayoral one: fewer than six thousand people have the franchise. At these per-vote prices, a Presidential campaign would cost a trillion dollars.

And that's just the "hard money." Hollywood has "soft money," too. Academy rules ban filmmakers from giving parties for Academy members and forbid studios to hold screenings that "feature the live participation of the film's artists before or after the screening" or include "receptions, buffets or other refreshments"—even a lousy bag of popcorn. But if somebody else throws the party, or if non-Academy riffraff are also invited to the screening, then bring on the caviar and the stars. In other words, "independent expenditures" are O.K. So is negative campaigning. This year, "A Beautiful Mind," a front-runner in the big categories, has been the main target. The critics long ago pointed out that the film pretties up the facts about the real-life mathematician on whom the Russell Crowe character is based. Lately, though, anonymous leaks to the Drudge Report and other outlets of dubious respectability have "revealed" some nasty things which the mathematician (who, at the time, was in the grip of schizophrenic delusions that had him convinced he was the emperor of Antarctica) did and said, and which are omitted from the film. Crowe himself has been slammed for loutish behavior at an earlier awards ceremony. The "character issue" is big this year, both for source material and for actors, if not for what's actually on the screen. Meanwhile, the celebrity endorsements are flowing in, with Julia Roberts and Mel Gibson throwing their support behind Denzel Washington against Crowe. And three of the movie colony's most prominent ethnic groups—Brits, African-American superstars, and hobbits—have been jostling for position. Oscar politics ain't beanbag.



Hollywood, it may seem, has learned all there is to learn from the world of "real" politics. And, God knows, vice versa. But maybe not. Take the wonky, but actually quite important, question of voting systems. To pick Oscar winners, the Academy uses what we call plurality voting and the British call "first past the post." The Oscar "goes to" whichever

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

nominee—there are usually five—gets more votes than any one of the others. This is why mediocre, bombastic movies that are obviously disliked by the majority of Academy members and other discerning filmgoers are so often rewarded with golden statuettes. The *nominees*, however, are chosen differently. Academy members still get one vote each, but they can list up to five favorites in order of preference. Any film or actor that gets a fifth of the first-place votes is nominated automatically, and the rest are chosen by considering alternative preferences. As a result, meritorious work frequently makes it to the finals.

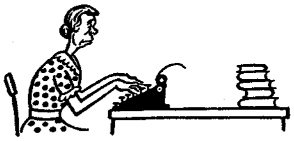
Something analogous is beginning to happen, in a small way, outside the zone of glitz. On March 5th, voters in San Francisco decided to adopt "instant runoff voting" for mayor and other officials elected citywide. That same day, clear across the country in bucolic Vermont, fifty-one town meetings passed resolutions asking the state legislature to adopt the same system for gubernatorial and other statewide races. Under I.R.V., voters can list their choices in order of preference. If no candidate tops fifty per cent, the losers are dropped from the count one by one and the votes are retallied, with each voter's vote going to his or her favorite still in the race, until someone has a majority. (Computers do the math in a flash.) The system is an exotic novelty here, but it is used routinely in Australia, Ireland, and England, and, of course, in the nominating process of the Academy.

San Francisco and Vermont are special cases. San Francisco previously staged separate runoff elections between the top two finishers, which costs money and rewards zero-sum negative campaigning. In Vermont, if no gubernatorial candidate gets an absolute majority the legislature picks whoever it wants. That's already happened twenty-one times, and it's likely to happen again this year, because four plausible candidates will be on the ballot. But there are similar movements afoot in places—Alaska and New Mexico, for example—that, like almost all of America, currently use plain old plurality voting.

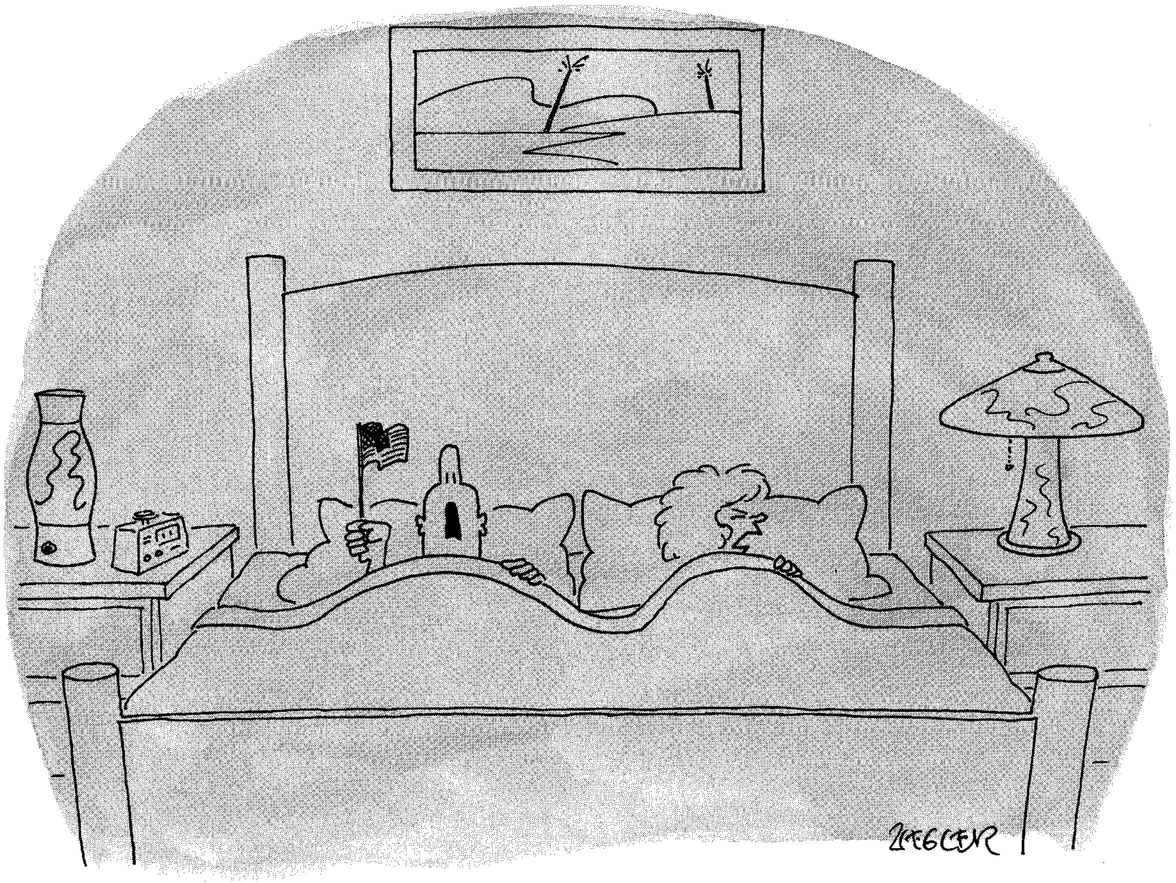
If the instant-runoff system begins to take hold, the impact on America's political culture could be profound. It would encourage civility, discourage fratricidal negative campaigning, prevent the election of candidates strongly opposed by majorities, and broaden the range of candidates while eliminating the third-party spoiler phenomenon. The two big parties would retain their primacy, but no one can say which would benefit. The only sure winners would be the voters. Remember them? The people who, on the whole, would rather be watching the Oscars?

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

INK
THE WATCHDOG OF OCEAN PARKWAY



It was question-and-answer time at the Barnes & Noble on Broadway at Eighty-second Street on a recent Friday night. Frank Bruni, a reporter for the *Times*, had just finished reading from "Ambling Into History," his account of



"Can we please sign off just one night without the national anthem?"

George W. Bush's Presidential campaign and first year in the White House. A pale woman in the third row spoke up: "Many media outlets, including the *Village Voice*, *Salon*, and *The New Republic*, have accused you, for lack of a better word, of being a major suckup," she said, her voice reflecting a half century's tenure in Brooklyn. As the woman spoke, Bruni's eyes widened behind his green-rimmed glasses. "Are you Reba Shimansky?" he asked, cutting her off. "From Ocean Parkway?"

Indeed she was. Bruni's guess wasn't as wild as it might sound; Shimansky spends a couple of hours each night at the computer in her kitchen, reading articles and writing angry letters to political reporters around the country. "I started writing letters in the early part of the Clinton Administration," she said the other day, sitting in her living room. "I felt there was a right-wing spin machine that protects Republicans. And I just wanted to try and correct that." Shimansky, who describes herself as a "single woman who happens to have time on her hands," said that she spent two and a half hours travelling to Bruni's reading—she works in Staten Island—but that she'd never waste her time reading his book. "What for?"

"There's a lot of things that anger me," she said. "I can't help it. This is a hobby, a passion. But I don't want people to feel my life is dominated by this. I guess I would call myself more of a party Democrat than an issues person. They always say there's a liberal bias out there. I don't see it. I think the Democrats can be wimps. We don't have a Rush Limbaugh."

Shimansky is a sturdy woman who favors outfits that are almost monochromatic, like a crimson turtleneck with a red sweater and a maroon skirt. She has lived her whole life in the apartment she was born in; she shared it with her parents until they died, and she still sleeps in a bed in the living room. She reads six newspapers a day—the *Times*, the New York *Post*, the *News*, *Newsday*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*—and as many magazines each week. She has worked for the state's Office of Mental Health for more than three decades, and hopes to retire to the Upper West Side.

Until then, she goes to Broadway shows with her friends, watches her share of movies, and writes a lot of letters. Shimansky keeps a pile of black-paged scrapbooks. Two are filled with letters she's written that have appeared in different publications—*Newsweek*, the New York *Observer*, *Newsday*. Six more are filled with journalists' letters to her.

"You like to think that in a certain way maybe you can shape the media coverage," Shimansky said. She noted that after frequent letters to Martin Peretz, the editor-in-chief of *The New Republic*, complaining about the former editor Michael Kelly and the former columnist Andrew Sullivan, both men moved on. "I assume that you know that Andrew Sullivan is no longer writing *TRB*," Peretz wrote to Shimansky last September, "and I assume that pleases you, as it does many others."

Most of the replies are not so kind. David Broder, a Washington *Post* political columnist, chided Shimansky for her "ill-tempered missive." The *News* editor, Ed Kosner, scribbled in the margin of one of her notes, "Enough already, Reba." And an unsuspecting Leonard Lopate sent a typed reply to a letter Shimansky had written haranguing the "New York & Co." host for what she perceived as excessive criticism of Bill Clinton. "Have you written similar complaints to others who have been critical of him?" Lopate asked. "Since there are so many, both right and left, it would have to take up a lot of your time."

"He has no idea," she said, flipping past Lopate's letter.

"Reba's like the cream of the crop when it comes to angry writers," says John Dickerson, who used to cover terrorism for *Time*. "I'd get letters with crayon in the margins, letters from the conspiracy theorists who write backward so you can only read them in the mirror. But Reba's were more impressive than anyone's. She's incredibly angry, but she's pretty clever. She even figured out my e-mail address."

Shimansky acknowledged that she's been on something of a roll recently, but she's still in pursuit of the letter writer's Holy Grail: an appearance in the *Times*. "I've gotten answers from people there," she said. "But never something in print. I think I know why I've never appeared there. My letters are a little too emotional. They want something a little more cerebral." For now, her encounter with Bruni will have to suffice. "He seemed very nice," she said afterward. "And smart, too. I have no idea why he likes that worthless, dim-witted, ne'er-do-well bum."

—*Seth Mnookin*

MAD AS HELL DEPT.

THE BASHO OF HONK

Most New Yorkers, at some point or other, have been tempted to hurl semi-solid objects at automobiles operated by drivers who lean too heavily on the horn. A few days before Christmas, Aaron Naparstek had the urge. It was around noon. He was working at home, in a third-floor apartment in the Cobble Hill section of Brooklyn, while outside, on Clinton Street, the cars were backed up and, as usual, honking away. This stretch of Clinton, one block south of Atlantic Avenue, is often jammed, owing to the timing of various traffic lights, so it tends to be one of the city's car-horn hot spots, right up there with Broome Street and Herald Square.

"I'd reached my limit," Naparstek, who is thirty-one and works as a Web-site producer, said last week. He recalled that one car in particular, "a shitty little blue sedan," was issuing forth a single, sustained honk. After at least a minute of this, Naparstek got up from his desk and calmly walked toward the kitchen, thinking, If he's still leaning on that horn when I get back, he's going to get it.

The honker was still leaning when Naparstek threw open his window. "I want windshield," Naparstek vowed, and hurled three eggs, in quick succession, down onto the blue sedan. The first hit the trunk, the second the roof, the third the windshield, just as the driver was getting out of the car. "He was a fireplug, balding, fortyish—a Brooklyn man of indeterminate ethnicity," Naparstek said. "He went ballistic. He yelled up at me, 'I see where you live, motherfucker! I'm coming back tonight! I'm gonna kill you!' He kept saying this, over and over. 'I'm gonna kill you!' Then the other cars started blasting their horns at him.

"After he drove away," Naparstek

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went on, "I realized, I am insane now. I have become the honking, and the honking has become me. I cannot throw eggs. It is bad and wrong. But I can't just do nothing, either."

That night, to calm himself, he wrote about twenty haiku about honking, which he called "honku." He made fifty printouts of each, numbered them, and, in early January, began affixing them to lampposts around the neighborhood. The first to appear was:

You from New Jersey
honking in front of my house
in your S.U.V.

He found the act of posting this first honku therapeutic, so he posted some more:

Terrorism is
a Lincoln Continental
leaning on the horn.

Smoking cigarettes
blasting Hot 97
futilely honking.

Oh, forget Enron,
the problem around here is
all the damn honking.

One day, he went out to put up another round and discovered that there were new honku on the lampposts, composed by others. Soon the lampposts were wrapped in honku by a variety of anonymous neighborhood honkuists:

What keeps me from just
pelting your honking auto
with rotting garbage?

We walk happily.
You honk in snarled traffic.
Who gets there first? Us!!

Oh, jeezus Chrysler,
What's all the damned honking Ford?
Please shut the truck up!

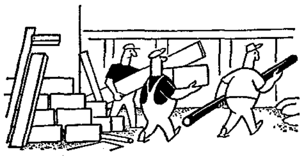
Throughout the winter, there have been dozens of honku, which have helped give rise to a shadow anti-honk movement. "No doubt, this has raised consciousness of the honking," Naparstek said. "Literally moments ago, there was a huge blast of honking, and I heard a guy yell, 'What's the point?' I looked outside, and he was walking down the street with his girlfriend, pointing to a sign on the street that reads 'No Honking—$125 Penalty.' "

Now Naparstek is thinking of suing the Taxi and Limousine Commission over the decibel level of the horns on Ford Crown Victorias (that is, most cabs). He is also moving ahead with plans to blanket the neighborhood with "honkards": detachable messages, like those tearaway help-wanted tags, that passersby can hand to honkers as the need arises. One such honkard reads, "How would you like it if I walked up to your open window and shouted at the top of my lungs: 'Hoooooonnnnnnnk!' Wait, let's see."

"That's something I've done before, actually," Naparstek said. "You have to be careful. People go nuts. I honked a guy, and he got so angry he was making gurgling sounds."

—*Nick Paumgarten*

AT THE MUSEUMS
MOMA ON THE MOVE



Last week, the Museum of Modern Art moved its hundred-and-eighty-thousand-volume library to a new, temporary home in Long Island City, Queens. A lavishly refitted factory once occupied by Swingline, the stapler company, will be MOMA's headquarters from late June, when it opens to the public, until at least 2005, while the site on Fifty-third Street, in Manhattan, is renovated and expanded.

The museum has spent fifty million dollars to purchase the old factory and turn it into three huge galleries, with tens of thousands of square feet of storage space. "I saw it when it was Swingline staple," Bill Maloney, MOMA's project director, said last week as he toured the site with Richard Vikse, the project manager. "There were these huge coils of aluminum that I guess would just end up as staples in a box."

Soon, the building will be full of priceless works of art. In order to protect the collection, the factory has been outfitted with the latest mechanical and air systems: giant computer-monitored vents, dust collectors, air filters, "smoke purges," and special fans that suck out invisible toxins, such as the vapors emitted by plywood. ("Off-gassing," as it's called, can damage the art.) "We have a guy on board who has done a lot of hospital work," Vikse said. "He's done operating rooms that don't have as stringent requirements as we do."

Security, as one might imagine, is a major issue. The building has a fenced-in roof with "a perimeter that can't be broken," Vikse says, and a sophisticated network of video cameras, motion detectors, and beam sensors. "We could show people the control room," Maloney says, "but then we'd have to kill them."

With all the care being taken to protect the art during its stay in Queens, administrators are also alert to dangers that might befall it during its transfer from Manhattan, which will begin later this month. The museum has calculated that it will take three hundred and eighty-five trips to empty MOMA of its entire collection of paintings, sculptures, photographs, drawings, and prints. Each crate of art will be carefully loaded onto a truck—which, for security reasons, museum officials will describe only as "large." After crossing the East River into Queens (officials won't reveal the route, either, but aspiring Thomas Crowns may want to stake out the Queensboro Bridge), the truck will pull into what is called a mantrap. The mantrap functions like the air lock on a spaceship or a submarine. Once the truck is inside, it is sealed off from both the museum and the street by a set of steel doors. Nothing can get in or out until each crate has been weighed on a huge scale set into the floor. "When they weigh the art, they can tell if anything has been done to it," Vikse said (although the museum later said that the scale had nothing to do with security).

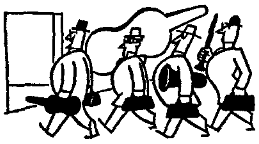
The art work—assuming it's all there—will then be loaded onto a massive elevator, which will convey it up to the storage rooms, the restorers, the framers, or the galleries. (While drilling a hole for the elevator's hydraulic piston, contractors hit groundwater, which required three months of additional work. "I called it the money pit," Vikse said.)

Upstairs at the new museum, on a balcony that will soon be a bookstore and a café, Vikse and Maloney ran into Glenn Lowry, MOMA's director. Lowry was accompanied by a group of designers, who were discussing the color of the ceilings, air ducts, and handrailings in the main entrance. Lowry had apparently failed to note the "Wet Paint" signs plastered throughout the building—he had a few fresh white splotches on his nice blue coat. "I'm not bothered by the white ceiling in the least, and I really don't want to make the ductwork too important," Lowry said. "Tell the architect that I'm more worried about the color of the railings."

Vikse, Maloney, and Lowry conferred for a few minutes, and then Vikse looked up at the ceiling. "Look at that ductwork," he said. "To me, that's art."

—*Andy Young*

DEPT. OF HOOPLA
HEADS TALKING AGAIN



Whatever alarming images the phrase "international voting body of about a thousand rock experts" might conjure, let's give that hoary community some credit. It accomplished, in a single ballot, what the four former members of Talking Heads couldn't—or wouldn't—in eighteen years: it got David Byrne, Chris Frantz, Jerry Harrison, and Tina Weymouth to agree to reunite, however briefly, and perform onstage again as Talking Heads. They'll play at least two songs this week when they are inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame during a ceremony at—not the Mudd Club or CBGB—the Waldorf-Astoria.

"It's kind of an uptown gig, and we were always a downtown band," Frantz, the drummer, said last week, phoning from his and Weymouth's home in Connecticut. "But, you know, when people offer you these honors I think it's a good idea to accept them." He laughed. "It gives us a Hollywood ending—the rise, the fall, the struggle, the stress, and then the happy ending. It's perfect. Going out with a bang and a giggle."

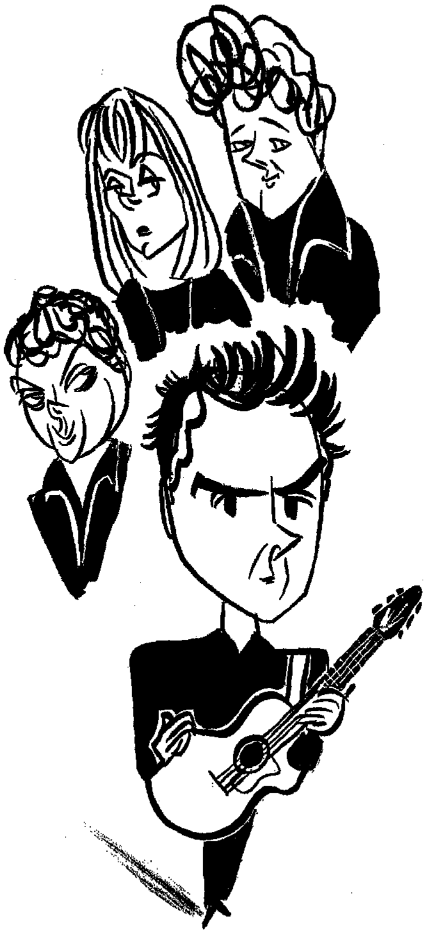
"I think we all, coming from New York City, tend to be cynical about things like the Grammys and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame," Harrison, the band's keyboardist and guitarist, said from Marin County, where he now lives and works producing records. "But then you meet someone who's in the Baseball Hall of Fame, and you're like, 'Wow!' Like, I met Rod Carew on the streets of Milwaukee once. *Rod Carew*. So you think, Why shouldn't we have something like that? And, of course, your kids think it's great."

In the weeks before the event, Byrne, just back in New York from a tour of Australia and Japan, was busy working on various music and art projects and attending the Whitney Biennial in saddle shoes. As the front man, he was the first to outgrow the band and the most determined to keep his distance from it. Although all of the band's members worked on side projects while Talking Heads was still a going concern, Byrne got most of the attention, especially once he branched out into film, in 1986, with "True Stories." By that time, the band had stopped touring.

The breakup was slow but rancorous. "Chris and Tina tried to be cool about the wind-down of Talking Heads, but after a while it started to really gnaw at them, and a certain amount of strain developed in their relationship with David," Harrison said. "My own relationship with David got strained when he objected to us using the name 'The Heads' on an album in 1996." Byrne filed a lawsuit against his former bandmates; it was settled out of court.

"Being in a band is a little bit like being around people you went to grade school with," Harrison went on. "The people who remember you when you were really stupid or, you know, you had an accident at school. And they never let you forget it. I'm of the mind that that's what's strong about bands and what's good about keeping your old friends. Particularly if you get famous, it's very good to have the grounding experience of people who are not impressed, because they knew you back when you weren't. But it's a tension for people, and I think that maybe David got sick of that."

"There's a lot of stress being in a rock group, trying to be fabulous all the time," Frantz said. "We were fabulous most of the time, but maybe not all of the time."



Talking Heads

Talking Heads will be inducted along with Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, Brenda Lee, Isaac Hayes, Gene Pitney—and the Ramones. "It's great justice for the bands from CBGB's," Harrison said. "It's a shame that more of us couldn't get in. But it's even hard to argue against AC/DC or Black Sabbath"—both of which were nominated but not voted in this year.

Frantz said, "We were hoping to be inducted by Lou Reed, except he has a première of 'Metal Machine Music' live in Berlin. Lou Reed was one of the first people in the music business to notice us. He used to come down to CBGB's and then take us to his apartment, which was on the East Side at that time. No furniture, but a really nice apartment, with a doorman. And he kind of took us under his wing and told us a lot of horror stories. He was full of praise for the fact that we had a woman in the band—or 'a chick,' as he put it—and he liked the fact that our lyrics had some big words and that we wrote about everyday problems."

For some reason, two members of the Red Hot Chili Peppers will do the honors instead. "Well, at least those guys have a sense of humor," Frantz said. "And it'll be interesting to see what they wear."

—*George Kalogerakis*

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THE HIGH MARK

Mountains, grizzlies, and the smell of exhaust in the morning.

BY MARK SINGER

COOKE CITY, MONTANA

For residents of Cooke City, Montana, where winter customarily announces itself before Halloween and sticks around well into May, occasionally into June, the official arrival of spring is an incidental fact. Not counting dogs and cats, Cooke City has a winter population of a hundred self-selected souls—all of whom, it seems, are wedded to the proposition that the climate is ideal. Cooke City (elevation: 7,600 feet) sits just north of the Wyoming state line, in a narrow valley of the Absaroka Range. Although precipitation has been a bit below normal this season, at Daisy Pass, five miles away and two thousand feet higher, four hundred inches of snow have fallen. As a rule, the snow is the dry-as-dust variety—stuff that, if you dive into a fresh pile of it, gives you the sensation of tumbling into a bowl of flour. By the time it settles and gets compacted by snowmobiles, which are ubiquitous in Daisy Pass, it's down to a mere eight or ten feet.

"Cooke City became this off-the-grid place where you could run your machine up, dow

Seven months a year, Cooke City is literally at the end of the road, cut off from its nearest neighbor to the east, Red Lodge, by snowdrifts in the spectacular Beartooth Pass so deep that Highway 212 disappears. It's a fifty-five-mile trip to the supermarket, another seventy to the county seat, Livingston, and thirty more to Bozeman, where there's a Costco. The only automobile access is by way of a two-lane meander through Yellowstone National Park. Once the road leaves the park, it runs another four miles until it becomes Cooke City's four-block-long main street. At the far end of town, just past a café and rental cabins called the Grizzly Pad, the snowplow stops and the snowmobile trail-grooming machine takes over.

The Grizzly Pad was my destination when I drove into Cooke City one Friday afternoon last month. I'd reserved what a travel agent assured me was the last available room in town on a busy weekend when visitors would outnumber the locals three or four to one. During the ride through Yellowstone, I found plenty to keep me occupied: agoraphobia-inducing mountains, valleys, and gorges; herds of elk and bison foraging in the pines or rooting in the snowy meadows or planting themselves stolidly in the roadway; pronghorn antelope; ravens; the occasional eagle. In the broad, glazed valley of the Lamar River, I spent several minutes studying a silvery critter a hundred yards away, perched atop a boulder beneath a black spruce, before concluding that it was a coyote rather than, as I'd hoped, a lone wolf that had strayed from one of the *Canis lupus* families that were reintroduced to Yellowstone in 1995. There wasn't much traffic, but, three times while I was parked on the shoulder, pickup trucks with Idaho plates, towing snowmobile trailers, chugged past me.

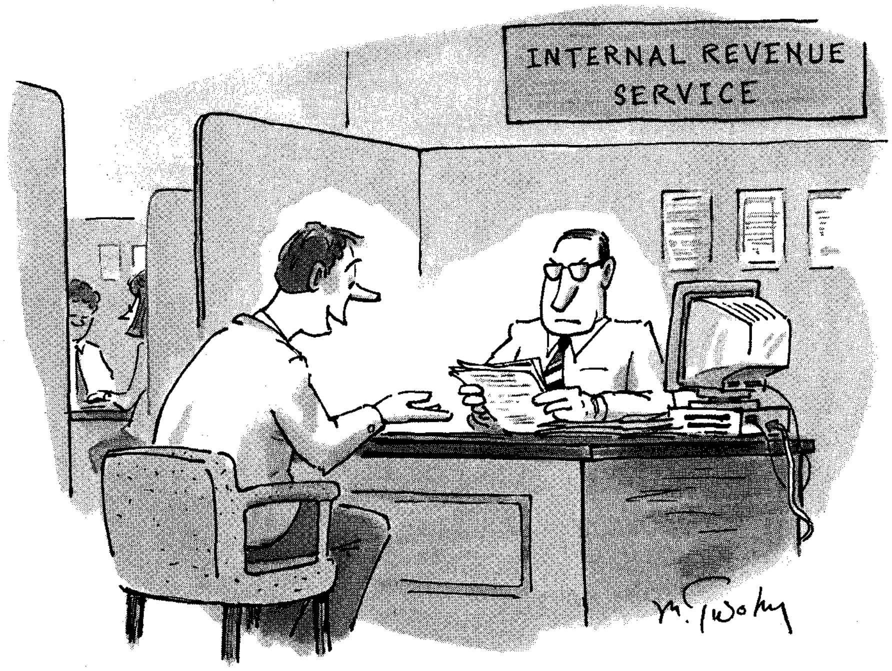
round, and sideways for miles and miles." Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

When I reached Cooke City, I knew immediately that by virtue of my being trailerless and snowmobileless I was consigned to a tiny, pitiable minority. Outside the town's biggest hostelry, the no-vacancy thirty-two-room Soda Butte Lodge, dozens of Yamaha, Ski-Doo, Polaris, and Arctic Cat high-performance machines were lined up uniformly, like suburban commuters on a train platform. While I was checking in at the Grizzly Pad, snowmobilers were arriving from beyond the "Road Closed" sign, pulling plastic sleds laden with luggage. I saw a multitasking father riding with two pacifier-sucking toddlers balanced in front of him, then a family of four clad in Martian-green snowsuits and helmets, astride matching mom-and-pop and junior-sized machines. These travellers and scores of others had made the last leg of their journey from a parking lot ten miles east of town, where Highway 212 intersected a plowed road bound for Cody, Wyoming. Most had started out from what I heard one Cooke City citizen refer to as "back East"—Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and other places where flatness is the norm and unfenced snowmobiling terrain is an elusive commodity—and they had arrived with the breathless reverence of pilgrims at a shrine. They were buoyed by an absolute confidence that, no matter how noisy or smelly or generally obnoxious their vehicles might strike narrow-minded folk elsewhere, there wasn't a mortal in Cooke City who would utter a discouraging word.

Most avid snowmobilers believe that where the trail ends the real fun begins. One dubious but popular local activity is high-marking, an amusement that thrives in inverse proportion to good sense. High-markers seek steep slopes covered by fresh powder, and there they play chicken with the laws of gravity, full-throttling uphill until the moment when either they turn back down the slope or their sleds topple. While high-marking obviously involves a certain quotient of brawn and athleticism—demanding more finesse than, say, competitive peeing for distance—it was most aptly characterized, for me anyway, as "a perfect example of what happens to people's brains when they get a big machine between their legs." A successful day of high-marking is one in which the rider spends no time underneath his sled, the snowmobile itself emerges undamaged, and no one has triggered an avalanche.

The adult male who people in Cooke City agree is the least likely to devote his leisure hours to high-marking—or, for that matter, to driving a snowmobile—is a fifty-one-year-old environmental activist and iconoclast named Jim Barrett, who had distinguished himself among the locals in the aftermath of a Fourth of July, 1998, mountain-bike ride that he took in an area adjacent to Cooke City known as the New World Mining District. To get there, Barrett pedalled east on Highway 212 and then onto a gravel road that steadily climbed toward Daisy Pass. During the winter, this is the main path to the backcountry playground that draws the snowmobiling masses to Cooke City. The New World Mining District—where gold was extracted from the late eighteen-sixties until the turn of the century—comprises ten miles of groomed trails and approximately twenty-five square miles where snowmobilers, depending upon the topography and the trees, are free to roam. (Beyond its boundaries lie national-forest and designated wilderness lands where motorized vehicles are prohibited—which is not to say that this prohibition is rigorously obeyed.)

Even though the high-marking season was, of course, long over by the Fourth of July, Barrett discovered ample



"It's funny how two intelligent people can have such opposite interpretations of the tax code!"

• •

testosterone flowing in the mountains. He was accustomed to seeing four-wheel all-terrain vehicles both on and off the trail, but he was startled to discover that the high-pitched internal-combustion whine he heard in the distance was coming not from an A.T.V. but from a snowmobile. A descending snowmobile passed him on the gravel road, and when he reached Daisy Pass he was greeted by the sight of a dozen more snowmobilers hopscotching across the alpine meadows between the lingering patches of snow.

Barrett's subsequent sworn declaration of what he saw became evidence in a lawsuit against the U.S. Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Department of the Interior. (The suit was brought by several conservation organizations, including the Sierra Club and the Park County Environmental Council, of which Barrett was the executive director.) There were already prohibitions about motorized vehicles in the wilderness areas; the suit arose because they clearly weren't being enforced. By neglecting to monitor snowmobilers adequately, the lawsuit alleged, the government was abetting the disruption of the habitat of grizzly bears, a protected species. As the litigation evolved, the plaintiffs argued that until the impact of snowmobiling was assessed, it should be banned from mid-April to mid-December, when the bears aren't hibernating.

What the lawsuit really amounted to, businesspeople in Cooke City will tell you, was an unconscionable attempt to deprive them of their livelihood. The Montana Snowmobile Association formally joined the action, volunteering itself as a defendant, and, even today, its legal-defense fund is spoken of reverentially, in last-best-hope-for-mankind terms, by the owners of Cooke City's motels, restaurants, and snowmobile franchises and service shops. The suit is unresolved—last year a federal judge in Billings ruled that the snowmobiling season could be kept intact for now pending further evidence (leaving the bears, as ever, to fend for themselves)—and an atmosphere of pious vigilance remains in Cooke City. The consensus, in any case, is that it's only a matter of time before another bunch of environmental activists come along and try to ruin a good thing.

There's no official municipal government in Cooke City, and no flesh-and-blood law-enforcement personnel. During warm-weather months, a junked patrol car with a dummy behind the wheel is stationed at each end of town to discourage speeders. One implication would seem to be: what is there to steal? Indeed, for most of Cooke City's history prosperity was elsewhere. Hunting and fishing provided seasonal work for outfitters and guides, there was some small-scale logging, and the motels, bars, and retail shops got busy during the abbreviated summers and autumns, catering to Yellowstone visitors. Otherwise, as I was told by Bill Sommers, a forty-year resident now in the employ of Cooke City Exxon, a service station and snowmobile dealership owned by his son, Rick, "You couldn't make a dime from the middle of November to Memorial Day weekend."

In the late eighties, two significant events—one of which actually turned out to be a non-event—took place. During the summer of 1988, lightning ignited a series of forest fires in the Yellowstone region that were allowed to burn freely for several days. After one fire spread north and east of the park, into the Gallatin National Forest, the Forest Service decided to combat it with a backburn, which, when the wind shifted inauspiciously, very nearly incinerated Cooke City. One of the fire's legacies is a scarred, deforested mountainside that dominates the view to the north. Another, odder consequence was the snowmobiling boom. The trails in the New World Mining District had been opened almost ten years earlier and were attracting riders mainly from Montana and Wyoming. Suddenly, Cooke City was in the news and flatlanders in the Midwest began hearing about this off-the-grid place in the mountains where—check it out, dude—you could run your machine up, down, around, and sideways for miles and miles. The crowds have been showing up, in increasing numbers, ever since.

The year after the fire, a fight began over whether the Canadian conglomerate that owned the claims in the New World Mining District would be allowed to resume active digging for gold. Predictably, various environmental groups mobilized, describing scenarios of potential devastation to the Yellowstone ecosystem. By the time the federal government settled the issue, in 1996, by buying out the conglomerate—after seven years of legal skirmishes and propaganda—the pro and anti factions in Cooke City had discussed the topic far beyond the point where civil discourse ceased. There were good reasons to oppose the resumption of mining, because it posed a genuine risk to a beautiful, sacrosanct national treasure. But, for many people, opposition to the mines' reopening became irrationally bound up with the future of snowmobiling. The logic went: if you allow the government in now (to stop people from digging for gold), then you're setting yourself up to let the government in again later (to do something really evil, like stopping snowmobiling). The mine question is now a dead issue, but the urge to demonize continues as strong as ever. The prejudices of those most offended by the government's high hand during the mine fight were reinforced by the fact that, locally, the opposition was led by the town's willing pariah, Jim Barrett, and his wife, Heidi. Last year, a sign was posted on the cash register at Cooke City Exxon that said "We Reserve the Right to Refuse Service to Anyone"—anyone, in this case, specifically meaning the Barretts. Though they still own a cabin on Soda Butte Creek, where they spend occasional weekends, the Barretts now reside in Livingston.

My first night at the Grizzly Pad, I was serenaded, more or less, by a black Labrador retriever chained outside the quarters of a neighbor of mine, a long-term tenant whose name, I gathered, was Steve. Earlier, as John Gurbach, the Grizzly Pad's owner, showed me to my cabin, he said, by way of apologizing as we sidestepped a carpet of dog turds, "I told Steve, 'Clean up or the dog goes.' He's hoping for snow." Unlocking the door, Gurbach said, "Like I told 'em, it's not the lap of luxury." I liked it anyway, even the lethal icicles depending from the roof. I didn't mind that four of the five windows were covered with plywood and fibreglass insulation. No television, no telephone, and no room service, but on a coffee table I found a Grizzly Pad Café menu promising milkshakes "big enough to swim a moose—a very small moose." There was also a kitchenette, a propane heater, and brown-everything Wally the Woodchopper décor. In Manhattan, it would easily have fetched twenty-five hundred dollars a month, with or without the antler door handles.

I awoke at five-fifteen the next morn-

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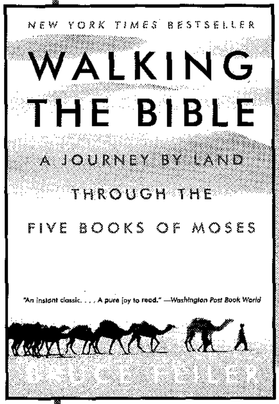
inspirational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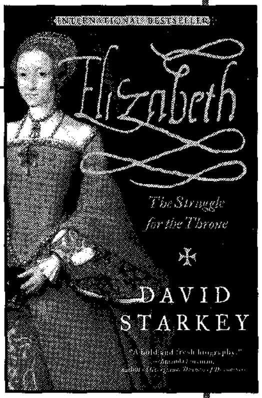
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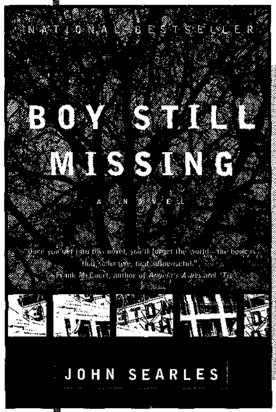
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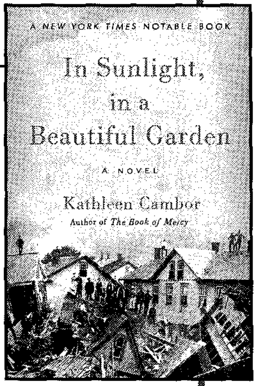
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ing, jolted by the thought that someone had broken in with a chainsaw. Of course, it was just the snowmobile traffic outside my door. It kept coming intermittently, but somehow I fell back to sleep. By the time I stirred, ate breakfast, and wandered down the street for some fact-gathering, I'd been overtaken by events. At around ten o'clock, three men, part of a group of five who had been high-marking on Mt. Abundance, a couple of miles northwest of Daisy Pass, had got caught in an avalanche. I heard about it when I dropped by the local Yamaha dealership, where I'd hoped to learn about the new four-stroke-engine high-performance model that will be available late next summer, a technology that will supposedly reduce hydrocarbon emissions substantially. The owner wasn't there, because, along with about half the adult population, he belonged to the search-and-rescue squad. I hung around long enough to listen to an employee give a safety drill to a party of eight from South Dakota who were renting snowmobiles and, wisely, strap-on safety beacons—radio transmitter-receivers that, it was later reported, none of the high-markers on Mt. Abundance had been wearing. One woman asked, hopefully, "So, if you're caught in an avalanche, you put your hands in front of your face to create an airspace, right?" "Yeah" was the reply. "And kiss your ass goodbye."

My next stop was Cooke City Exxon, where I had reserved a snowmobile for the next day. I also had to rent boots, gloves, coveralls, and a helmet, and I might have tried to rent a riding companion if I hadn't got lucky at the Elk Horn Lodge, an eight-unit motel owned by Suzy Schmitt and her fiancé, Jason Hahn. I'd heard Suzy described as a characteristic Cooke City jackette-of-many-trades. In 1994, on her way home to Virginia from Yellowstone, she had stopped in Cooke City, planning to stay for a couple of weeks, and never left. She'd tended bar, waitressed, owned another motel, substitute-taught at the Cooke City School (kindergarten through eighth grade; enrollment, six), and been the backup postmaster. She also played second base for the Cooke City Cream, which, when it isn't on probation because of rowdy behavior by its fans, competes in the Yellowstone Park Softball League. Jason, who was the left fielder ("Jason pretty much had to share left field with an elk last season"), spends his winters working in Washington State, and had just arrived for a long weekend. He volunteered to be my guide.

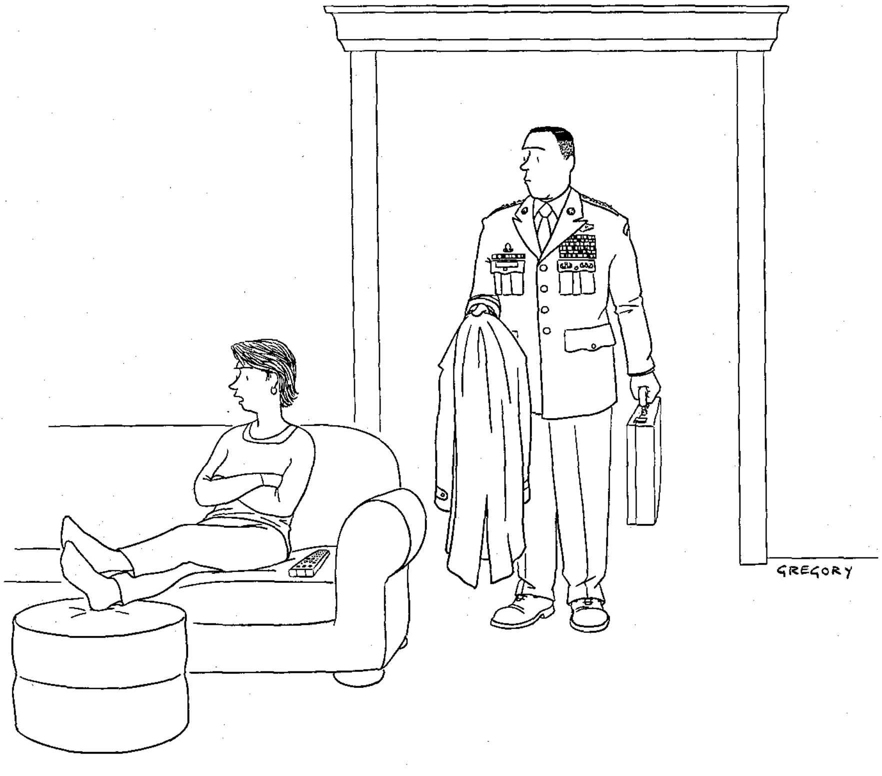
By nine o'clock the next morning, we were zipping up the denuded, lunar-looking trail to Daisy Pass. I rode a Polaris Rocky Mountain King 600, a machine that, I'd been assured, could do ninety miles per hour on a straightaway. An inch of fresh powder had fallen, and the morning light was dull and flat. Very few other riders were out and about—possibly because it was Sunday, or perhaps because there had been a minor exodus in the wake of the avalanche. At a spot called Lulu Pass, Jason pointed out an upright rod with a loop at the top, a storage device for the aluminum probe poles used in post-avalanche searches.

Mountain snowmobiles have uncomplicated drive mechanisms—throttle, brake, no gearshift, no reverse—and, as I learned after we crested an abrupt declivity, almost no traction when the sled is moving steeply downhill on its runners. At such moments, there isn't much to do except steer and hope that you won't get turned sideways to the slope. We dipsy-doodled in woods of spruce and whitebark pine and then headed through a benign bowl-like valley until we came upon a far less benign vista—a perilous-looking cornice on Mt. Abundance. This was, we realized, very near the avalanche site. One of the victims had managed to dig himself out and escaped with a broken nose, but the other two had died. What, I wondered, could they have been thinking as they imprinted their high-marking tracks?

"I would stay off that slope for sure," Jason said. "Or, if I went on it, it would just be one sled at a time."

We rode for an hour and a half. The most rewarding aspect was the Imax scenery, and the least fun part was ingesting the rubbery exhaust from Jason's machine. Once we were back in town, a combination of, I assume, vertigo and carbon monoxide put me to sleep for an hour, a nap interrupted by a knock at the door from another Grizzly Pad lodger—and another Jason, this one named Flug—who invited me to go for another ride. We revisited some of the same groomed trails I'd covered that morning, and got considerably more adventurous off the trail. By three o'clock, I was ready to head back to Cooke City Exxon and return my sled, a couple of hours ahead of schedule.

The Upper Yellowstone Snowmobile Club was holding a weenie roast and raffle that afternoon at the Exxon station, a fund-raiser for the Montana Snowmobile



"How did Operation Remember to Pick Up Milk go?"

Association's legal-defense fund. The m.c. was Jerry Dye, a peripatetic civic booster who holds court at six o'clock every evening in the bar of the Soda Butte Lodge. His right-hand man was Mark Linthacum, a neighbor just down the road from Cooke City, in Silver Gate, where, depending upon whom you ask, the winter population is either four or six or eight. Raffle tickets cost five dollars, and another five entitled you to all the chili dogs you could eat. For no extra charge, Dye was offering straight-from-the-bottle bumps of Doctor McGillicuddy's peppermint schnapps. This was a warmup for an attempt to get Cooke City listed in the "Guinness World Records" (category: largest number of people simultaneously participating in a toast). "We're gonna line people up on both sides of the street and pour everybody a shot of the Doctor," he told me. "We need a hundred and ninety to break the record." (Actually, according to the Guinness people the existing record is 462,572.)

I had noticed that snowmobilers—maybe their helmets got in the way, or maybe it was the Cooke City demographics—tend not to be sparkling conversationalists. This seemed especially true of the crowd that had gathered for the raffle drawing, buff and beefy guys with jock-and-cop haircuts, wraparound shades, and bright-colored logo-emblazoned baseball caps and jackets that made them look like NASCAR-driver wanna-bes. Dye worked hard to get them animated. "Come on, people," he pleaded into a megaphone. "This is your last chance. Get your tickets. Now's the best time to buy 'em." But they were a taciturn, sullen bunch, except for the ticket-holder who won the first of many merchandise prizes—something called a hot-dogger, a doohickey that attaches to a snowmobile's muffler (a component I was surprised to learn existed) and cooks lunch while you drive—and the cash-prize winner, who walked away with half the kitty, just over a thousand dollars.

Later, at Dye's house, west of town, I sat down with him and Mark Linthacum for what I thought would be a lighthearted conversation about Cooke City's social rituals, and it did begin that way. Dye, who looks like Popeye with a trimmed white beard and a bulbous nose, started off talking about the annual hog roast and auction that he and his wife, Mary, organize to benefit the Fire Department

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and the search-and-rescue and emergency medical crews. Then, somehow, our discussion segued to a diatribe against the common enemy: any interventionist who would interfere with the rights of snowmobilers, or any other law-abiding citizens, to go where they pleased and do as they pleased on public lands. (There is, of course, a proposal being considered by the Secretary of the Interior, Gale Norton, to ban snowmobiles from Yellowstone and the Grand Teton National Parks.)

"Our community will fight multimillion-dollar organizations, the Sierra Club and these other groups, to keep what we have," Linthacum said. "A guy from the Montana Wilderness Association came to one of our Snowmobile Association meetings and told us that our trails are too close to the boundary of the wilderness area. He said we're guilty of all these incursions into the wilderness. But, you know, all the reports they come up with for incursions are double. Because, if they see forty tracks, they don't count that as half the tracks going in and half coming out. The math is obvious—you've got to divide by two—but that doesn't work with the Sierra Club, or with Congress, or with your tree-huggers, bunny-kissers, or whatever."

Linthacum had spent the previous day on the avalanche search and, after a border collie located the bodies, had dug one victim from the snow. I asked whether killer avalanches weren't as bad for business as environmentalists. He gave me a quizzical look.

"Hey, we're not discriminatory," he said. "We'd pull out snowshoers, cross-country skiers. We'd even pull out Jim Barrett."

"I wouldn't pull the sonofabitch out," Dye said. "I'd let him lay there forever."

"But, Jerry," Linthacum said, "you wouldn't know who was in there until you pulled him out."

"Well, I'd stuff him back in."

Each evening, I had dinner at the Soda Butte Lodge—something long on cholesterol, washed down by a couple of Moose Drool beers. One night, I wound up at a table adjacent to five Germans, devoted members of the Gesellschaft zum Schutz der Wölfe (Society for the Protection of Wolves), who were on their fourth annual visit to Yellowstone. They were ecstatic about what they'd been seeing in the park—mating time had arrived, or, as one of them described it, "high wolf-fucking season"—and diplomatic about the human species they'd encountered. ("We had some problems with snowmobilers who told us they were chasing foxes and coyotes with their machines. This is a point we have to oppose, of course. But we hope these are the exceptions.")

My last night in Cooke City, aware that I'd negligently failed to explore its after-hours charms, I went into the bar at the Soda Butte. John Gurbach was there, and he introduced me to an acquaintance named Wayne, a carpenter who had built the bar, as well as the one down the block, at the Miner's Saloon.

"Let me ask you this question," Wayne said. "I just want to ask you this. Who's the last person to ride a snowmobile from one end of the bar to the other at the Miner's?"

"I give up."

"You're looking at him. We had two skinny-track Ski-Doos, two snow machines, inside that bar. I finally said, 'Fuck it. I'll ride it.' I even jumped the goddam waitress station. Next guy that tried, he fell into the cooler."

This was confirmed, with a slight demurral, by another patron, a fellow who said his name was Chips. "Wayne did not gracefully leap the waitress station," he said. "He took it out with him."

John Gurbach invited me to the Miner's Saloon, and when we got there he encouraged me to check out the men's room, where the urinal was full of loose change. I ordered a Moose Drool, and Gurbach asked for a shot of peppermint schnapps. The Miner's had video-poker machines and pool tables and a beautiful stained-oak bar that Wayne evidently had not only built but rebuilt. Above my head, pinned to the rafters, was a T-shirt commemorating something called Butt Darts, a popular pastime that, according to the bartender, had lapsed "ever since the lady in charge moved to Red Lodge." The clock said eleven, well past my bedtime. As I walked back to the Grizzly Pad, it was snowing and utterly quiet, until I passed the Soda Butte just as Chips and Jason Flug were coming out. They jumped on their snowmobiles.

"Where you headed?" I asked.

"We're going to the Miner's," Jason said. The night was young, but as they embarked on their fifty-yard journey they seemed to be in a hurry. ♦

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Woods with Vanessa Williams at the LA opening, with her husband, Los Angeles Laker star forward Rick Fox.

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Sondheim alumna Angela Lansbury was among the opening-night Woods-goers.

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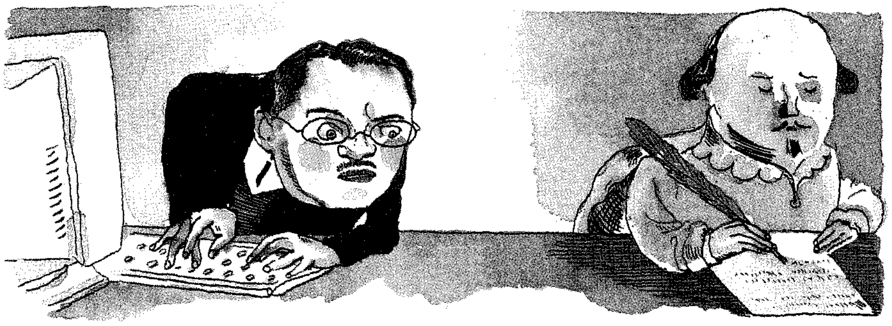
SHOUTS & MURMURS

ALL APOLOGIES

BY PAUL RUDNICK



BARRY BLITT

To my readers:

As many of you have been told, by either the media or anyone who knows me, I have recently been accused of the completely innocent and wholly understandable appropriation of words not entirely my own. These charges can be easily and appealingly explained as follows:

1. In my work, I employ a team of crack research assistants, several of whom have been guilty of taking less than adequate notes. Therefore, in my landmark, five-volume, Pulitzer-winning biography of John Adams, Volumes III and IV are partially drawn from an existing biography of Cindy Adams.

2. My shocking memoir of children's-vitamin abuse, "I Need More Wilmas," was somewhat inspired by a cocktail-napkin jotting by Elizabeth Wurtzel, which was so incoherent that I assumed it was my own.

3. While I was writing my first novel, I often copied out sentences from beloved, legendary authors, simply so I could learn from their masterly literary rhythms. I never intended in any way to mimic their actual words, although several minor clerical slipups occur in my epics, "Moby Rick" and "Warren Pees."

4. Owing to a dry-cleaning mixup, in my last three appearances on the "Charlie Rose" show I am wearing one of Joyce Carol Oates's sweaters.

5. I committed an unconscious homage in my searing autobiography, "A Child Called That Stupid Thing That Can't Pick Up Its Feet," and in my follow-up, "Fifty You-Can-Do-It Rainy-Day Projects with a Child Called That Stupid Thing That Can't Pick Up Its Feet."

6. In my meditation on American military ethics, "Hershey Bars and Nylons," I inadvertently included charts from Richard Simmons's autobiography of the same title.

7. An enchanted gnome entered my apartment as I slept, and completed the final three chapters of my best-selling "Diana, the Princess Nobody Knew, Especially Not Me." When I asked the gnome what he wanted in return, he replied, "Your immortal soul," but I told him that my immortal soul had already been bartered to a woodland sprite, in exchange for some minor editing on my seminal "Napoleon: Little Tiny Shoes, Great Big Dreams."

8. In my courtroom thriller, "Judge Mental," the character of the handsome, crusading yet moody young district attorney was mistakenly drawn from John Grisham's dust-jacket photos.

9. Occasionally, I will xerox another author's work, to see how it looks with blotchy gray areas. Therefore, my self-help must-have, "Learning to Love Yourself in Public," shares several blurry footnotes with the earlier "Learning to Love Yourself on the Bus." ♦

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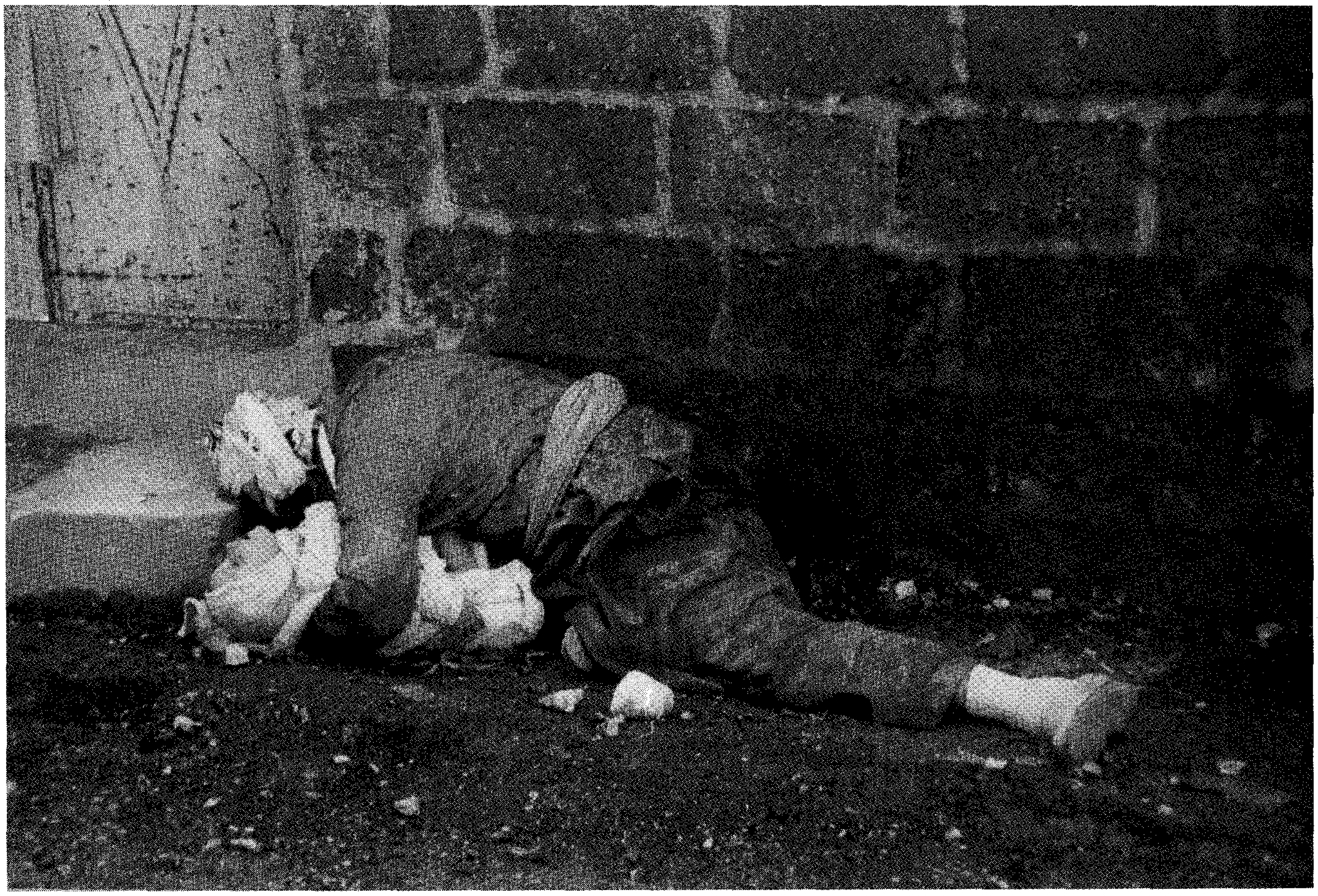


A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE GREAT TERROR

In northern Iraq, there is new evidence of Saddam Hussein's genocidal war on the Kurds—and of his possible ties to Al Qaeda.

BY JEFFREY GOLDBERG

In the late morning of March 16, 1988, an Iraqi Air Force helicopter appeared over the city of Halabja, which is about fifteen miles from the border with Iran. The Iran-Iraq War was then in its eighth year, and Halabja was near the front lines. At the time, the city was home to roughly eighty thousand Kurds, who were well accustomed to the proximity of violence to ordinary life. Like most of Iraqi Kurdistan, Halabja was in perpetual revolt against the regime of Saddam Hussein, and its inhabitants were supporters of the *peshmerga*, the Kurdish fighters whose name means "those who face death."

A young woman named Nasreen Abdel Qadir Muhammad was outside her family's house, preparing food, when she saw the helicopter. The Iranians and the *peshmerga* had just attacked Iraqi military outposts around Halabja, forcing Saddam's soldiers to retreat. Iranian Revolutionary Guards then infiltrated the city, and the residents assumed that an Iraqi counterattack was imminent. Nasreen and her family expected to spend yet another day in their cellar, which was crude and dark but solid enough to withstand artillery shelling, and even napalm.

"At about ten o'clock, maybe closer to ten-thirty, I saw the helicopter," Nasreen told me. "It was not attacking, though. There were men inside it, taking pictures. One had a regular camera, and the other held what looked like a video camera. They were coming very close. Then they went away."

Nasreen thought that the sight was strange, but she was preoccupied with lunch; she and her sister Rangeen were preparing rice, bread, and beans for the thirty or forty relatives who were taking shelter in the cellar. Rangeen was fifteen at the time. Nasreen was just sixteen, but her father had married her off several months earlier, to a cousin, a thirty-year-old physician's assistant named Bakhtiar Abdul Aziz. Halabja is a conservative place, and many more women wear the veil than in the more cosmopolitan Kurdish cities to the northwest and the Arab cities to the south.

The most enduring image of the attack on Halabja: a Kurdish man who died while trying to shield his grandson from poison gas.

The bombardment began shortly before eleven. The Iraqi Army, positioned on the main road from the nearby town of Sayid Sadiq, fired artillery shells into Halabja, and the Air Force began dropping what is thought to have been napalm on the town, especially the northern area. Nasreen and Rangeen rushed to the cellar. Nasreen prayed that Bakhtiar, who was then outside the city, would find shelter.

The attack had ebbed by about two o'clock, and Nasreen made her way carefully upstairs to the kitchen, to get the food for the family. "At the end of the bombing, the sound changed," she said. "It wasn't so loud. It was like pieces of metal just dropping without exploding. We didn't know why it was so quiet."

A short distance away, in a neighborhood still called the Julakan, or Jewish quarter, even though Halabja's Jews left for Israel in the nineteen-fifties, a middle-aged man named Muhammad came up from his own cellar and saw an unusual sight: "A helicopter had come back to the town, and the soldiers were throwing white pieces of paper out the side." In retrospect, he understood that they were measuring wind speed and direction. Nearby, a man named Awat Omer, who was twenty at the time, was overwhelmed by a smell of garlic and apples.

Nasreen gathered the food quickly, but she, too, noticed a series of odd smells carried into the house by the wind. "At first, it smelled bad, like garbage," she said. "And then it was a good smell, like sweet apples. Then like eggs." Before she went downstairs, she happened to check on a caged partridge that her father kept in the house. "The bird was dying," she said. "It was on its side." She looked out the window. "It was very quiet, but the animals were dying. The sheep and goats were dying." Nasreen ran to the cellar. "I told everybody there was something wrong. There was something wrong with the air."

The people in the cellar were panicked. They had fled downstairs to escape the bombardment, and it was difficult to abandon their shelter. Only splinters of light penetrated the basement, but the dark provided a strange comfort. "We wanted to stay in hiding, even though we were getting sick," Nasreen said. She felt a sharp pain in her eyes, like stabbing needles. "My sister came close to my face and said, 'Your eyes are very red.' Then the children started throwing up. They kept throwing up. They were in so much pain, and crying so much. They were crying all the time. My mother was crying. Then the old people started throwing up."

PHOTOGRAPH BY MAJID KARIMIAN

Chemical weapons had been dropped on Halabja by the Iraqi Air Force, which understood that any underground shelter would become a gas chamber. "My uncle said we should go outside," Nasreen said. "We knew there were chemicals in the air. We were getting red eyes, and some of us had liquid coming out of them. We decided to run." Nasreen and her relatives stepped outside gingerly. "Our cow was lying on its side," she recalled. "It was breathing very fast, as if it had been running. The leaves were falling off the trees, even though it was spring. The partridge was dead. There were smoke clouds around, clinging to the ground. The gas was heavier than the air, and it was finding the wells and going down the wells."

The family judged the direction of the wind, and decided to run the opposite way. Running proved difficult. "The children couldn't walk, they were so sick," Nasreen said. "They were exhausted from throwing up. We carried them in our arms."

Across the city, other families were making similar decisions. Nouri Hama Ali, who lived in the northern part of town, decided to lead his family in the direction of Anab, a collective settlement on the outskirts of Halabja that housed Kurds displaced when the Iraqi Army destroyed their villages. "On the road to Anab, many of the women and children began to die," Nouri told me. "The chemical clouds were on the ground. They were heavy. We could see them." People were dying all around, he said. When a child could not go on, the parents, becoming hysterical with fear, abandoned him. "Many children were left on the ground, by the side of the road. Old people as well. They were running, then they would stop breathing and die."

Nasreen's family did not move quickly. "We wanted to wash ourselves off and find water to drink," she said. "We wanted to wash the faces of the children who were vomiting. The children were crying for water. There was powder on the ground, white. We couldn't decide whether to drink the water or not, but some people drank the water from the well they were so thirsty."

They ran in a panic through the city, Nasreen recalled, in the direction of Anab. The bombardment continued intermittently, Air Force planes circling overhead. "People were showing different symptoms. One person touched some of the powder, and her skin started bubbling."

A truck came by, driven by a neighbor. People threw themselves aboard. "We saw people lying frozen on the ground," Nasreen told me. "There was a small baby on the ground, away from her mother. I thought they were both sleeping. But she had dropped the baby and then died. And I think the baby tried to crawl away, but it died, too. It looked like everyone was sleeping."

At that moment, Nasreen believed that she and her family would make it to high ground and live. Then the truck stopped. "The driver said he couldn't go on, and he wandered away. He left his wife in the back of the truck. He told us to flee if we could. The chemicals affected his brain, because why else would someone abandon his family?"

As heavy clouds of gas smothered the city, people became sick and confused. Awat Omer was trapped in his cellar with his family; he said that his brother began laughing uncontrollably and then stripped off his clothes, and soon afterward he died. As night fell, the family's children grew sicker—too sick to move.

Nasreen's husband could not be found, and she began to think that all was lost. She led the children who were able to walk up the road.

In another neighborhood, Muhammad Ahmed Fattah, who was twenty, was overwhelmed by an oddly sweet odor of sulfur, and he, too, realized that he must evacuate his family; there were about a hundred and sixty people wedged into the cellar. "I saw the bomb drop," Muhammad told me. "It was about thirty metres from the house. I shut the door to the cellar. There was shouting and crying in the cellar, and then people became short of breath." One of the first to be stricken by the gas was Muhammad's brother Salah. "His eyes were pink," Muhammad recalled. "There was something coming out of his eyes. He was so thirsty he was demanding water." Others in the basement began suffering tremors.

March 16th was supposed to be Muhammad's wedding day. "Every preparation was done," he said. His fiancée, a woman named Bahar Jamal, was among the first in the cellar to die. "She was crying very hard," Muhammad recalled. "I tried to calm her down. I told her it was just the usual artillery shells, but it didn't smell the usual way weapons smelled. She was smart, she knew what was happening. She died on the stairs. Her father tried to help her, but it was too late."

Death came quickly to others as well. A woman named Hamida Mahmoud tried to save her two-year-old daughter by allowing her to nurse from her breast. Hamida thought that the baby wouldn't breathe in the gas if she was nursing, Muhammad said, adding, "The baby's name was Dashneh. She nursed for a long time. Her mother died while she was nursing. But she kept nursing." By the time Muhammad decided to go outside, most of the people in the basement were unconscious; many were dead, including his parents and three of his siblings.

Nasreen said that on the road to Anab all was confusion. She and the children were running toward the hills, but they were going blind. "The children were crying, 'We can't see! My eyes are bleeding!' " In the chaos, the family got separated. Nasreen's mother and father were both lost. Nasreen and several of her cousins and siblings inadvertently led the younger children in a circle, back into the city. Someone—she doesn't know who—led them away from the city again and up a hill, to a small mosque, where they sought shelter. "But we didn't stay in the mosque, because we thought it would be a target," Nasreen said. They went to a small house nearby, and Nasreen scrambled to find food and water for the children. By then, it was night, and she was exhausted.

Bakhtiar, Nasreen's husband, was frantic. Outside the city when the attacks started, he had spent much of the day searching for his wife and the rest of his family. He had acquired from a clinic two syringes of atropine, a drug that helps to counter the effects of nerve agents. He injected himself with one of the syringes, and set out to find Nasreen. He had no hope. "My plan was to bury her," he said. "At least I should bury my new wife."

After hours of searching, Bakhtiar met some neighbors, who remembered seeing Nasreen and the children moving toward the mosque on the hill. "I called out the name Nasreen," he said. "I heard crying, and I went inside the house. When I got there, I found that Nasreen was alive but blind. Everybody was blind."

Nasreen had lost her sight about an hour or two before Bakhtiar found her. She had been searching the house for food, so that she could feed the children, when her eyesight failed. "I found some milk and I felt my way to them and then I found their mouths and gave them milk," she said.

Bakhtiar organized the children. "I wanted to bring them to the well. I washed their heads. I took them two by two and washed their heads. Some of them couldn't come. They couldn't control their muscles."

Bakhtiar still had one syringe of atropine, but he did not inject his wife; she was not the worst off in the group. "There was a woman named Asme, who was my neighbor," Bakhtiar recalled. "She was not able to breathe. She was yelling and she was running into a wall, crashing her head into a wall. I gave the atropine to this woman." Asme died soon afterward. "I could have used it for Nasreen," Bakhtiar said. "I could have."

After the Iraqi bombardment subsided, the Iranians managed to retake Halabja, and they evacuated many of the sick, including Nasreen and the others in her family, to hospitals in Tehran.

Nasreen was blind for twenty days. "I was thinking the whole time, Where is my family? But I was blind. I couldn't do anything. I asked my husband about my mother, but he said he didn't know anything. He was looking in hospitals, he said. He was avoiding the question."

The Iranian Red Crescent Society, the equivalent of the Red Cross, began compiling books of photographs, pictures of the dead in Halabja. "The Red Crescent has an album of the people who were buried in Iran," Nasreen said. "And we found my mother in one of the albums." Her father, she discovered, was alive but permanently blinded. Five of her siblings, including Rangeen, had died.

Nasreen would live, the doctors said, but she kept a secret from Bakhtiar: "When I was in the hospital, I started menstruating. It wouldn't stop. I kept bleeding. We don't talk about this in our society, but eventually a lot of women in the hospital confessed they were also menstruating and couldn't stop." Doctors gave her drugs that stopped the bleeding, but they told her that she would be unable to bear children.

Nasreen stayed in Iran for several months, but eventually she and Bakhtiar returned to Kurdistan. She didn't believe the doctors who told her that she would be infertile, and in 1991 she gave birth to a boy. "We named him Arazoo," she said. Arazoo means hope in Kurdish. "He was healthy at first, but he had a hole in his heart. He died at the age of three months."

I met Nasreen last month in Erbil, the largest city in Iraqi Kurdistan. She is thirty now, a pretty woman with brown eyes and high cheekbones, but her face is expressionless. She doesn't seek pity; she would, however, like a doctor to help her with a cough that she's had ever since the attack, fourteen years ago. Like many of Saddam Hussein's victims, she tells her story without emotion.

During my visit to Kurdistan, I talked with more than a hundred victims of Saddam's campaign against the Kurds. Saddam has been persecuting the Kurds ever since he took power, more than twenty years ago. Several old women whose husbands were killed by Saddam's security services expressed a kind of animal hatred toward him, but most people, like Nasreen, told stories of horrific cruelty with a dispassion and a precision that underscored their credibility. Credibility is important to the Kurds; after all this time, they still feel that the world does not believe their story.

A week after I met Nasreen, I visited a small village called Goktapa, situated in a green valley that is ringed by snow-covered mountains. Goktapa came under poison-gas attack six weeks after Halabja. The village consists of low mud-brick houses along dirt paths. In Goktapa, an old man named Ahmed Raza Sharif told me that on the day of the attack on Goktapa, May 3, 1988, he was in the fields outside the village. He saw the shells explode and smelled the sweet-apple odor as poison filled the air. His son, Osman Ahmed, who was sixteen at the time, was near the village mosque when he was felled by the gas. He crawled down a hill and died among the reeds on the banks of the Lesser Zab, the river that flows by the village. His father knew that he was dead, but he couldn't reach the body. As many as a hundred and fifty people died in the attack; the survivors fled before the advancing Iraqi Army, which levelled the village. Ahmed Raza Sharif did not return for three years. When he did, he said, he immediately began searching for his son's body. He found it still lying in the reeds. "I recognized his body right away," he said.

The summer sun in Iraq is blisteringly hot, and a corpse would be unidentifiable three years after death. I tried to find a gentle way to express my doubts, but my translator made it clear to Sharif that I didn't believe him.

We were standing in the mud yard of another old man, Ibrahim Abdul Rahman. Twenty or thirty people, a dozen boys among them, had gathered. Some of them seemed upset that I appeared to doubt the story, but Ahmed hushed them. "It's true, he lost all the flesh on his body," he said. "He was just a skeleton. But the clothes were his, and they were still on the skeleton, a belt and a shirt. In the pocket of his shirt I found the key to our tractor. That's where he always kept the key."

Some of the men still seemed concerned that I would leave Goktapa doubting their truthfulness. Ibrahim, the man in whose yard we were standing, called out a series of orders to the boys gathered around us. They dispersed, to houses and storerooms, returning moments later holding jagged pieces of metal, the remnants of the bombs that poisoned Goktapa. Ceremoniously, the boys dropped the pieces of metal at my feet. "Here are the mercies of Uncle Saddam," Ibrahim said.

2. THE AFTERMATH

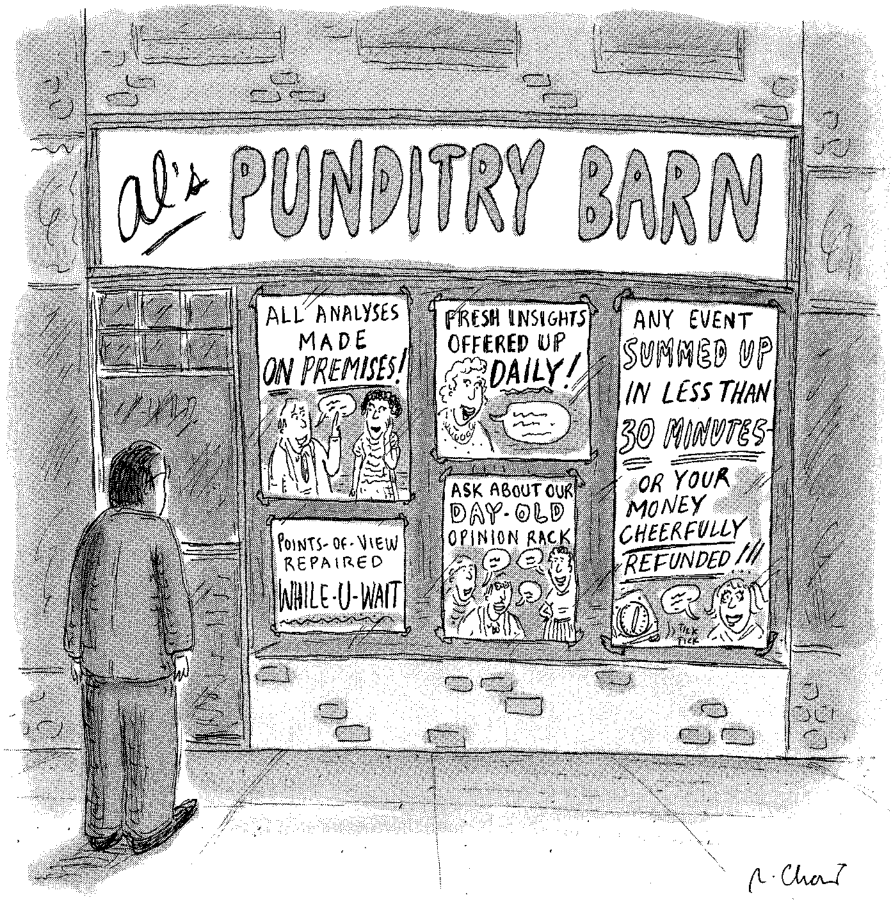
The story of Halabja did not end the night the Iraqi Air Force planes returned to their bases. The Iranians invited the foreign press to record the devastation. Photographs of the victims, supine, bleached of color, littering the gutters and alleys of the town, horrified the world. Saddam Hussein's attacks on his own citizens mark the only time since the Holocaust that poison gas has been used to exterminate women and children.

Saddam's cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid, who led the campaigns against the Kurds in the late eighties, was heard on a tape captured by rebels, and later obtained by Human Rights Watch, addressing members of Iraq's ruling Baath Party on the subject of the Kurds. "I will kill them all with chemical weapons!" he said. "Who is going to say anything? The international community? Fuck them! The international community and those who listen to them."

Ali Hassan al-Majid, whom the Kurds have nicknamed Ali Chemical, needn't have worried about the international community, for at the time the world thought it was more important to oppose Iran, Iraq's enemy, than to interfere with Saddam. During the Iran-Iraq War, between 1980 and 1988, in which a million and a half people died, the West gave tacit support to Saddam. This support didn't end until Iraq invaded Kuwait, in August of 1990. As late as April of that year, a delegation of Americans met with Saddam in Baghdad; one of them, former Senator Alan Simpson, of Wyoming, said, "I believe your problem is with the Western media, not with the U.S. Government, because you are isolated from the media and the press." At that meeting, Saddam told Bob Dole, then the Senate Minority Leader, that his country would destroy its nonconventional weapons if Israel did the same. He also denied that Iraq was attempting to develop biological weapons.

When the Kurds dispatched a senior official named Mahmoud Othman to Washington, no one would see him. Through the maneuvers of a sympathetic Washington *Post* correspondent named Jonathan Randal, Othman finally arranged a meeting with a low-level State Department official, but at the last moment the meeting was cancelled. "I was trying to report on the chemical bombings," Othman told me, but he was informed that the meeting "would jeopardize relations with Saddam."

Attempts by Congress in 1988 to impose sanctions on Iraq were stifled by the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Reagan and Bush Administrations, and the story of Saddam's surviving victims might have vanished completely had it not been for the reporting of people like Randal and the work of a British documentary filmmaker named Gwynne Roberts, who, after hearing stories about a sudden spike in the incidence of birth defects and cancers, not only in Halabja but also in other parts of Kurdistan, had made some disturbing films on the subject. However, no Western government or United Nations agency took up the cause.

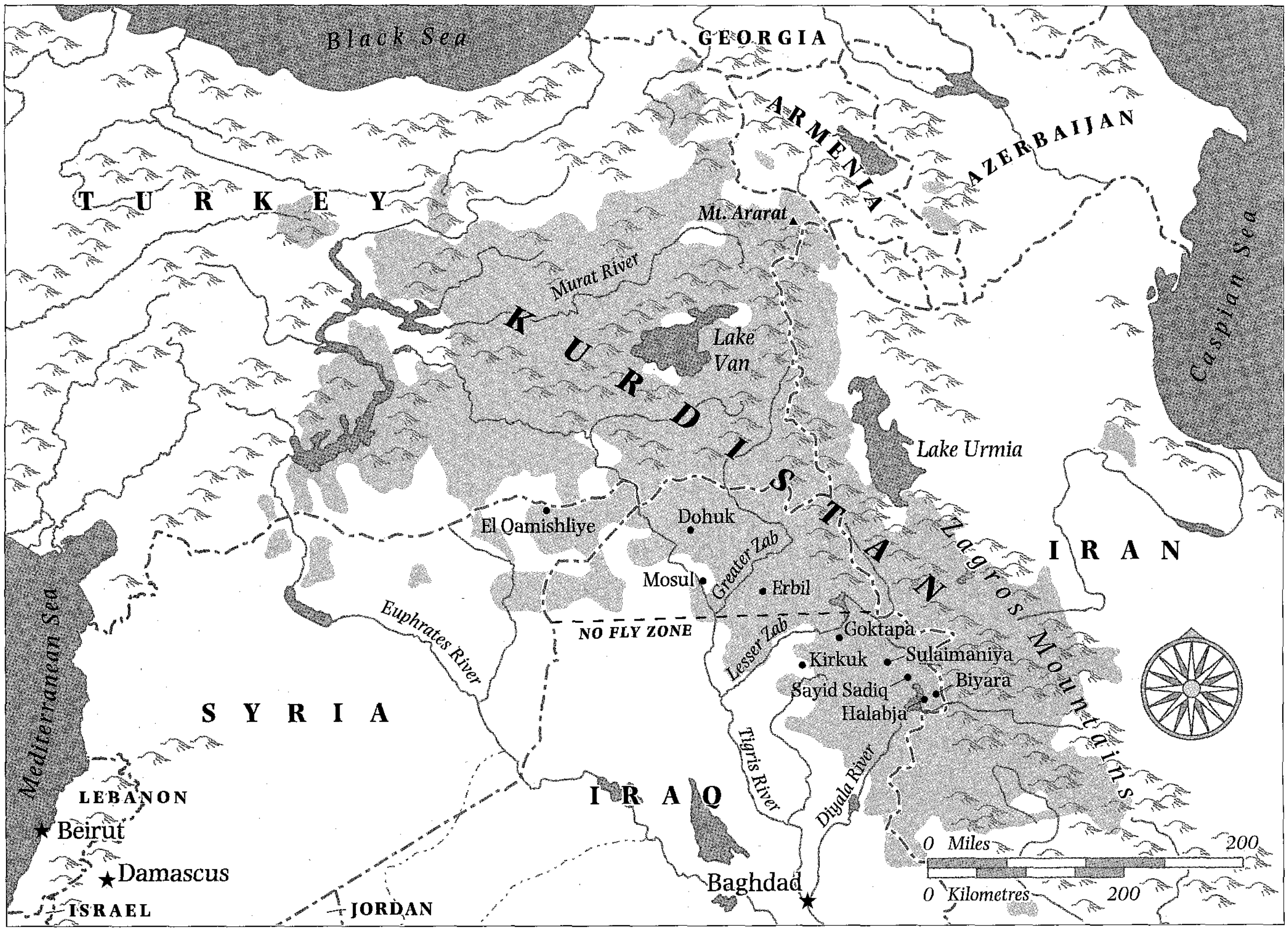
In 1998, Roberts brought an Englishwoman named Christine Gosden to Kurdistan. Gosden is a medical geneticist and a professor at the medical school of the University of Liverpool. She spent three weeks in the hospitals in Kurdistan, and came away determined to help the Kurds. To the best of my knowledge, Gosden is the only Western scientist who has even begun making a systematic study of what took place in northern Iraq.

Gosden told me that her father was a high-ranking officer in the Royal Air Force, and that as a child she lived in Germany, near Bergen-Belsen. "It's tremendously influential in your early years to live near a concentration camp," she said. In Kurdistan, she heard echoes of the German campaign to destroy the Jews. "The Iraqi government was using chemistry to reduce the population of Kurds," she said. "The Holocaust is still having its effect. The Jews are fewer in number now than they were in 1939. That's not natural. Now, if you take out two hundred thousand men and boys from Kurdistan"—an estimate of the number of Kurds who were gassed or otherwise murdered in the campaign, most of whom were men and boys—"you've affected the population structure. There are a lot of widows who are not having children."

Richard Butler, an Australian diplomat who chaired the United Nations weapons-inspection team in Iraq, describes Gosden as "a classic English, old-school-tie kind of person." Butler has tracked her research since she began studying the attacks, four years ago, and finds it credible. "Occasionally, people say that this is Christine's obsession, but obsession is not a bad thing," he added.

Before I went to Kurdistan, in January, I spent a day in London with Gosden. We gossiped a bit, and she scolded me for having visited a Washington shopping mall without appropriate protective equipment. Whenever she goes to a mall, she brings along a polyurethane bag "big enough to step into" and a bottle of bleach. "I can detoxify myself immediately," she said.

Gosden believes it is quite possible that the countries of the West will soon experience chemical- and biological-weapons attacks far more serious and of greater lasting effect than the anthrax incidents of last autumn and the nerve-agent attack on the Tokyo subway system several years ago—that what happened in Kurdistan was only the be-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Kurds are neither Arab, Persian, nor Turk. Spread across four countries, they are often called the world's largest stateless nation.

JEFFREY L. WARD

ginning. "For Saddam's scientists, the Kurds were a test population," she said. "They were the human guinea pigs. It was a way of identifying the most effective chemical agents for use on civilian populations, and the most effective means of delivery."

The charge is supported by others. An Iraqi defector, Khidhir Hamza, who is the former director of Saddam's nuclear-weapons program, told me earlier this year that before the attack on Halabja military doctors had mapped the city, and that afterward they entered it wearing protective clothing, in order to study the dispersal of the dead. "These were field tests, an experiment on a town," Hamza told me. He said that he had direct knowledge of the Army's procedures that day in Halabja. "The doctors were given sheets with grids on them, and they had to answer questions such as 'How far are the dead from the cannisters?' "

Gosden said that she cannot understand why the West has not been more eager to investigate the chemical attacks in Kurdistan. "It seems a matter of enlightened self-interest that the West would want to study the long-term effects of chemical weapons on civilians, on the DNA," she told me. "I've seen Europe's worst cancers, but, believe me, I have never seen cancers like the ones I saw in Kurdistan."

According to an ongoing survey conducted by a team of Kurdish physicians and organized by Gosden and a small advocacy group called the Washington Kurdish Institute, more than two hundred towns and villages across Kurdistan were attacked by poison gas—far more than was previously thought—in the course of seventeen months. The number of victims is unknown, but doctors I met in Kurdistan believe that up to ten per cent of the population of northern Iraq—nearly four million people—has been exposed to chemical weapons. "Saddam Hussein poisoned northern Iraq," Gosden said when I left for Halabja. "The questions, then, are what to do? And what comes next?"

3. HALABJA'S DOCTORS

The Kurdish people, it is often said, make up the largest stateless nation in the world. They have been widely despised by their neighbors for centuries. There are roughly twenty-five million Kurds, most of them spread across four countries in southwestern Asia: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. The Kurds are neither Arab, Persian, nor Turkish; they are a distinct ethnic group, with their own culture and language. Most Kurds are Muslim (the most famous Muslim hero of all, Saladin, who defeated the Crusaders, was of Kurdish origin), but there are Jewish and Christian Kurds, and also followers of the Yezidi religion, which has its roots in Sufism and Zoroastrianism. The Kurds are experienced mountain fighters, who tend toward stubbornness and have frequent bouts of destructive infighting.

After centuries of domination by foreign powers, the Kurds had their best chance at independence after the First World War, when President Woodrow Wilson promised the Kurds, along with other groups left drifting and exposed by the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, a large measure of autonomy. But the machinations of the great powers, who were becoming interested in Kurdistan's vast oil deposits, in Mosul and Kirkuk, quickly did the Kurds out of a state.

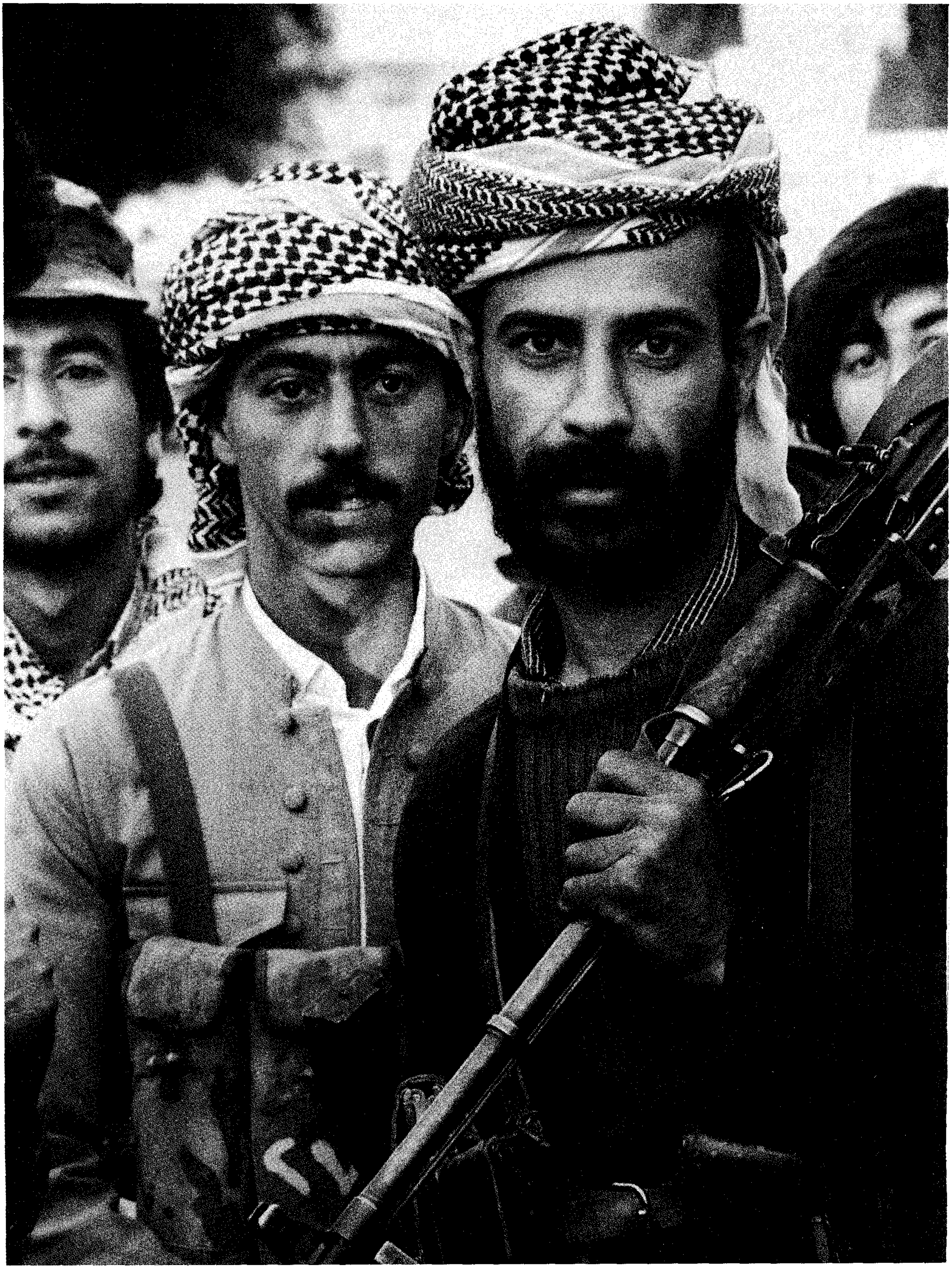
In the nineteen-seventies, the Iraqi Kurds allied themselves with the Shah of Iran in a territorial dispute with Iraq. America, the Shah's patron, once again became the Kurds' patron, too, supplying them with arms for a revolt against Baghdad. But a secret deal between the Iraqis and the Shah, arranged in 1975 by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, cut off the Kurds and brought about their instant collapse; for the Kurds, it was an ugly betrayal.

The Kurdish safe haven, in northern Iraq, was born of another American betrayal. In 1991, after the United States helped drive Iraq out of Kuwait, President George Bush ignored an uprising that he himself had stoked, and Kurds and Shiites in Iraq were slaughtered by the thousands. Thousands more fled the country, the Kurds going to Turkey, and almost immediately creating a humanitarian disaster. The Bush Administration, faced with a televised catastrophe, declared northern Iraq a no-fly zone and thus a safe haven, a tactic that allowed the refugees to return home. And so, under the protective shield of the United States and British Air Forces, the unplanned Kurdish experiment in self-government began. Although the Kurdish safe haven is only a virtual state, it is an incipient democracy, a home of progressive Islamic thought and pro-American feeling.

Today, Iraqi Kurdistan is split between two dominant parties: the Kurdistan Democratic Party, led by Massoud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, whose General Secretary is Jalal Talabani. The two parties have had an often angry relationship, and in the mid-nineties they fought a war that left about a thousand soldiers dead. The parties, realizing that they could not rule together, decided to rule apart, dividing Kurdistan into two zones. The internal political divisions have not aided the Kurds' cause, but neighboring states also have fomented disunity, fearing that a unified Kurdish population would agitate for independence.

Turkey, with a Kurdish population of between fifteen and twenty million, has repressed the Kurds in the eastern part of the country, politically and militarily, on and off since the founding of the modern Turkish state. In 1924, the government of Atatürk restricted the use of the Kurdish language (a law not lifted until 1991) and expressions of Kurdish culture; to this day, the Kurds are referred to in nationalist circles as "mountain Turks."

Turkey is not eager to see Kurds anywhere draw attention to themselves, which is why the authorities in Ankara refused to let me cross the border into Iraqi Kurdistan. Iran, whose Kurdish population numbers between six and eight million, was not helpful, either, and my only option for gaining entrance to Kurdistan was through its third neighbor, Syria. The Kurdistan Democratic Party arranged for me to be met in Damascus and taken to the eastern desert city of El Qamishli. From there, I was driven in a Land Cruiser to the banks of the Tigris River, where a small wooden boat, with a crew of one and an outboard motor, was waiting. The engine spluttered; when I learned that the forward lines of the Iraqi Army were two miles downstream, I began to paddle, too. On the other side of the river were representatives of the Kurdish Democratic Party and the *pesh-*



CONTACT

Kurdish fighters preparing a counter-offensive against Iraqi forces near Kirkuk in 1991. The first President Bush stoked their rebellion

'hen ignored it. Photograph by Don McCullin.

merga, the Kurdish guerrillas, who wore pantaloons and turbans and were armed with AK-47s.

"Welcome to Kurdistan" read a sign at the water's edge greeting visitors to a country that does not exist.

Halabja is a couple of hundred miles from the Syrian border, and I spent a week crossing northern Iraq, making stops in the cities of Dahuk and Erbil on the way. I was handed over to representatives of the Patriotic Union, which controls Halabja, at a demilitarized zone west of the town of Koysinjaq. From there, it was a two-hour drive over steep mountains to Sulaimaniya, a city of six hundred and fifty thousand, which is the cultural capital of Iraqi Kurdistan. In Sulaimaniya, I met Fouad Baban, one of Kurdistan's leading physicians, who promised to guide me through the scientific and political thickets of Halabja.

Baban, a pulmonary and cardiac specialist who has survived three terms in Iraqi prisons, is sixty years old, and a man of impish good humor. He is the Kurdistan coördinator of the Halabja Medical Institute, which was founded by Gosden, Michael Amitay, the executive director of the Washington Kurdish Institute, and a coalition of Kurdish doctors; for the doctors, it is an act of bravery to be publicly associated with a project whose scientific findings could be used as evidence if Saddam Hussein faced a war-crimes tribunal. Saddam's agents are everywhere in the Kurdish zone, and his tanks sit forty miles from Baban's office.

Soon after I arrived in Sulaimaniya, Baban and I headed out in his Toyota Camry for Halabja. On a rough road, we crossed the plains of Sharazoor, a region of black earth and honey-colored wheat ringed by jagged, snow-topped mountains. We were not travelling alone. The Mukhabarat, the Iraqi intelligence service, is widely reported to have placed a bounty on the heads of Western journalists caught in Kurdistan (either ten thousand dollars or twenty thousand dollars, depending on the source of the information). The areas around the border with Iran are filled with Tehran's spies, and members of Ansar al-Islam, an Islamist terror group, were said to be decapitating people in the Halabja area. So the Kurds had laid on a rather elaborate security detail. A Land Cruiser carrying *peshmerga* guerrillas led the way, and we were followed by another Land Cruiser, on whose bed was mounted an anti-aircraft weapon manned by six *peshmerga*, some of whom wore black balaclavas. We were just south of the American- and British-enforced no-fly zone. I had been told that, at the beginning of the safe-haven experiment, the Americans had warned Saddam's forces to stay away; a threat from the air, though unlikely, was, I deduced, not out of the question.

"It seems very important to know the immediate and long-term effects of chemical and biological weapons," Baban said, beginning my tutorial. "Here is a civilian population exposed to chemical and possibly biological weapons, and people are developing many varieties of cancers and congenital abnormalities. The Americans are vulnerable to these weapons—they are cheap, and terrorists possess them. So, after the anthrax attacks in the States, I think it is urgent for scientific research to be done here."

Experts now believe that Halabja and other places in Kurdistan were struck by a combination of mustard gas and nerve agents, including sarin (the agent used in the Tokyo subway attack) and VX, a potent nerve agent. Baban's suggestion that biological weapons may also have been used surprised me. One possible biological weapon that Baban mentioned was aflatoxin, which causes long-term liver damage.

A colleague of Baban's, a surgeon who practices in Dahuk, in northwestern Kurdistan, and who is a member of the Halabja Medical Institute team, told me more about the institute's survey, which was conducted in the Dahuk region in 1999. The surveyors began, he said, by asking elementary questions; eleven years after the attacks, they did not even know which villages had been attacked.

"The team went to almost every village," the surgeon said. "At first, we thought that the Dahuk governorate was the least affected. We knew of only two villages that were hit by the attacks. But we came up with twenty-nine in total. This is eleven years after the fact."

The surgeon is professorial in appearance, but he is deeply angry. He doubles as a pediatric surgeon, because there are no pediatric surgeons in Kurdistan. He has performed more than a hundred operations for cleft palate on children born since 1988. Most of the agents believed to have been dropped on Halabja have short half-lives, but, as Baban told me, "physicians are unsure how long these toxins will affect the population. How can we know agent half-life if we don't know the agent?" He added, "If we knew the toxins that were used, we could follow them and see actions on spermatogenesis and ovogenesis."

Increased rates of infertility, he said, are having a profound effect on Kurdish society, which places great importance on large families. "You have men divorcing their wives because they could not give birth, and then marrying again, and then their second wives can't give birth, either," he said. "Still, they don't blame their own problem with spermatogenesis."

Baban told me that the initial results of the Halabja Medical Institute-sponsored survey show abnormally high rates of many diseases. He said that he compared rates of colon cancer in Halabja with those in the city of Chamchamal, which was not attacked with chemical weapons. "We are seeing rates of colon cancer five times higher in Halabja than in Chamchamal," he said.

"Oh, he's nice enough, but he's one of those people who always start the standing ovations."

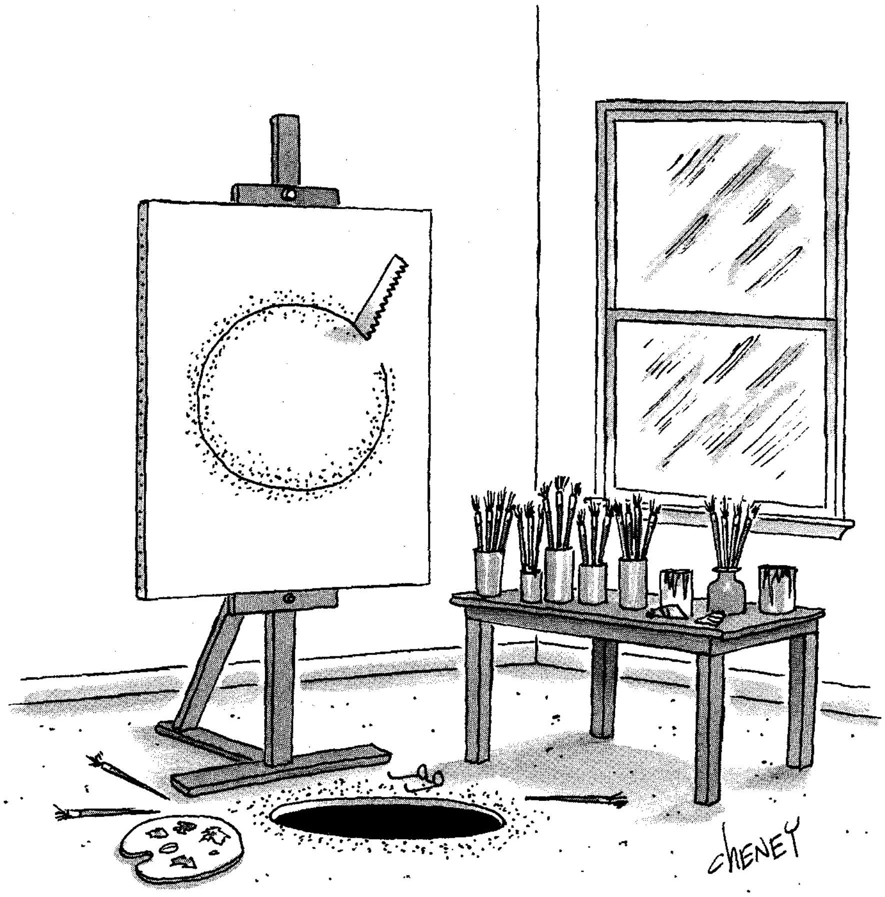
There are other anomalies as well, Baban said. The rate of miscarriage in Halabja, according to initial survey results, is fourteen times the rate of miscarriage in Chamchamal; rates of infertility among men and women in the affected population are many times higher than normal. "We're finding Hiroshima levels of sterility," he said.

Then, there is the suspicion about snakes. "Have you heard about the snakes?" he asked as we drove. I told him that I had heard rumors. "We don't know if a genetic mutation in the snakes has made them more toxic," Baban went on, "or if the birds that eat the snakes were killed off in the attacks, but there seem to be more snakebites, of greater toxicity, in Halabja now than before." (I asked Richard Spertzel, a scientist and a former member of the United Nations Special Commission inspections team, if this was possible. Yes, he said, but such a rise in snakebites was more likely due to "environmental imbalances" than to mutations.)

My conversation with Baban was suddenly interrupted by our guerrilla escorts, who stopped the car and asked me to join them in one of the Land Cruisers; we veered off across a wheat field, without explanation. I was later told that we had been passing a mountain area that had recently had problems with Islamic terrorists.

We arrived in Halabja half an hour later. As you enter the city, you see a small statue modelled on the most famous photographic image of the Halabja massacre: an old man, prone and lifeless, shielding his dead grandson with his body.

A torpor seems to afflict Halabja; even its bazaar is listless and somewhat empty, in marked contrast to those of other Kurdish cities, which are well stocked with imported goods (history and circumstance have made the Kurds enthusiastic smugglers) and are full of noise and activity. "Everyone here is sick," a Halabja doctor told me. "The people who aren't sick are depressed." He practices at the Martyrs' Hospital, which is situated on the outskirts of the city. The hospital has no heat and little



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advanced equipment; like the city itself, it is in a dilapidated state.

The doctor is a thin, jumpy man in a tweed jacket, and he smokes without pause. He and Baban took me on a tour of the hospital. Afterward, we sat in a bare office, and a woman was wheeled in. She looked seventy but said that she was fifty; doctors told me she suffers from lung scarring so serious that only a lung transplant could help, but there are no transplant centers in Kurdistan. The woman, whose name is Jayran Muhammad, lost eight relatives during the attack. Her voice was almost inaudible. "I was disturbed psychologically for a long time," she told me as Baban translated. "I believed my children were alive." Baban told me that her lungs would fail soon, that she could barely breathe. "She is waiting to die," he said. I met another woman, Chia Hammassat, who was eight at the time of the attacks and has been blind ever since. Her mother, she said, died of colon cancer several years ago, and her brother suffers from chronic shortness of breath. "There is no hope to correct my vision," she said, her voice flat. "I was married, but I couldn't fulfill the responsibilities of a wife because I'm blind. My husband left me."

Baban said that in Halabja "there are more abnormal births than normal ones," and other Kurdish doctors told me that they regularly see children born with neural-tube defects and undescended testes and without anal openings. They are seeing—and they showed me—children born with six or seven toes on each foot, children whose fingers and toes are fused, and children who suffer from leukemia and liver cancer.

I met Sarkar, a shy and intelligent boy with a harelip, a cleft palate, and a growth on his spine. Sarkar had a brother born with the same set of malformations, the doctor told me, but the brother choked to death, while still a baby, on a grain of rice.

Meanwhile, more victims had gathered in the hallway; the people of Halabja do not often have a chance to tell their stories to foreigners. Some of them wanted to know if I was a surgeon, who had come to repair their children's deformities, and they were disappointed to learn that I was a journalist. The doctor and I soon left the hospital for a walk through the northern neighborhoods of Halabja, which were hardest hit in the attack. We were trailed by *peshmerga* carrying AK-47s. The doctor smoked as we talked, and I teased him about his habit. "Smoking has some good effect on the lungs," he said, without irony. "In the attacks, there was less effect on smokers. Their lungs were better equipped for the mustard gas, maybe."

We walked through the alleyways of the Jewish quarter, past a former synagogue in which eighty or so Halabjans died during the attack. Underfed cows wandered the paths. The doctor showed me several cellars where clusters of people had died. We knocked on the gate of one house, and were let in by an old woman with a wide smile and few teeth. In the Kurdish tradition, she immediately invited us for lunch.

She told us the recent history of the house. "Everyone who was in this house died," she said. "The whole family. We heard there were one hundred people." She led us to the cellar, which was damp and close. Rusted yellow cans of vegetable ghee littered the floor. The room seemed too small to hold a hundred people, but the doctor said that the estimate sounded accurate. I asked him if cellars like this one had ever been decontaminated. He smiled. "Nothing in Kurdistan has been decontaminated," he said.

4. AL-ANFAL

The chemical attacks on Halabja and Goktapa and perhaps two hundred other villages and towns were only a small part of the cataclysm that Saddam's cousin, the man known as Ali Chemical, arranged for the Kurds. The Kurds say that about two hundred thousand were killed. (Human Rights Watch, which in the early nineties published "Iraq's Crime of Genocide," a definitive study of the attacks, gives a figure of between fifty thousand and a hundred thousand.)

The campaign against the Kurds was dubbed al-Anfal by Saddam, after a chapter in the Koran that allows conquering Muslim armies to seize the spoils of their foes. It reads, in part, "Against them"—your enemies—"make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into the hearts of the enemies of Allah and your enemies, and others besides, whom ye may not know, but whom Allah doth know. Whatever ye shall spend in the cause of Allah, shall be repaid unto you, and ye shall not be treated unjustly."

The Anfal campaign was not an end in itself, like the Holocaust, but a means to an end—an instance of a policy that Samantha Power, who runs the Carr Center for Human Rights, at Harvard, calls "instrumental genocide." Power has just published " 'A Problem from Hell,' " a study of American responses to genocide. "There are regimes that set out to murder every citizen of a race," she said. "Saddam achieved what he had to do without exterminating every last Kurd." What he had to do, Power and others say, was to break the Kurds' morale and convince them that a desire for independence was foolish.

Most of the Kurds who were murdered in the Anfal were not killed by poison gas; rather, the genocide was carried out, in large part, in the traditional manner, with roundups at night, mass executions, and anonymous burials. The bodies of most of the victims of the Anfal—mainly men and boys—have never been found.

One day, I met one of the thousands of Kurdish women known as Anfal widows: Salma Aziz Baban. She lives outside Chamchamal, in a settlement made up almost entirely of displaced families, in cinder-block houses. Her house was nearly empty—no furniture, no heat, just a ragged carpet. We sat on the carpet as she told me about her family. She comes from the Kirkuk region, and in 1987 her village was uprooted by the Army, and the inhabitants, with thousands of other Kurds, were forced into a collective town. Then, one night in April of 1988, soldiers went into the village and seized the men and older boys. Baban's husband and her three oldest sons were put on trucks. The mothers of the village began to plead with the soldiers. "We were screaming, 'Do what you want to *us*, do what you want!' " Baban told me. "They were so scared, my sons. My sons were crying."

INTERMEZZO

Lately I head down
to the river

& watch what washes
past: garbage

boats, tugs, occasional
sail. Dangle

my legs over the side
like a lure.

Unlocked, bicyclists
wind past on paths

only they can follow—
& you, somewhere, smart

in your new hat,
dressing for Saturday night—

Never again that shade
of lipstick will I taste

She tried to bring them coats for the journey. "It was raining. I wanted them to have coats. I begged the soldiers to let me give them bread. They took them without coats." Baban remembered that a high-ranking Iraqi officer named Bareq orchestrated the separation; according to "Iraq's Crime of Genocide," the Human Rights Watch report, the man in charge of this phase was a brigadier general named Bareq Abdullah al-Haj Hunta.

After the men were taken away, the women and children were herded onto trucks. They were given little water or food, and were crammed so tightly into the vehicles that they had to defecate where they stood. Baban, her three daughters, and her six-year-old son were taken to the Topzawa Army base and then to the prison of Nugra Salman, the Pit of Salman, which Human Rights Watch in 1995 described this way: "It was an old building, dating back to the days of the Iraqi monarchy and perhaps earlier. It had been abandoned for years, used by Arab nomads to shelter their herds. The bare walls were scrawled with the diaries of political prisoners. On the door of one cell, a guard had daubed 'Khomeini eats shit.' Over the main gate, someone else had written, 'Welcome to Hell.' "

"We arrived at midnight," Baban told me. "They put us in a very big room, with more than two thousand people, women and children, and they closed the door. Then the starvation started."

The prisoners were given almost nothing to eat, and a single standpipe spat out brackish water for drinking. People began to die from hunger and illness. When someone died, the Iraqi guards would demand that the body be passed through a window in the main door. "The bodies couldn't stay in the hall," Baban told me. In the first days at Nugra Salman, "thirty people died, maybe more." Her six-year-old son, Rebwar, fell ill. "He had diarrhea," she said. "He was very sick. He knew he was dying. There was no medicine or doctor. He started to cry so much." Baban's son died on her lap. "I was screaming and crying," she said. "My daughters were crying. We gave them the body. It was passed outside, and the soldiers took it."

Soon after Baban's son died, she pulled herself up and went to the window, to see if the soldiers had taken her

nor leave the jalousies
open to let in air

& our neighbors' envious stares.
Speedboats cough

along, the river heads
on relentless, regretless—

the way only the sea
& gravity may meet—

You descend the long
flickering stair

into what light is left—
still bright enough to blind

me, ashore, as sun skips
like stones off the steady water.

—*Kevin Young*

son to be buried. "There were twenty dogs outside the prison. A big black dog was the leader," she said. The soldiers had dumped the bodies of the dead outside the prison, in a field. "I looked outside and saw the legs and hands of my son in the mouths of the dogs. The dogs were eating my son." She stopped talking for a moment. "Then I lost my mind."

She described herself as catatonic; her daughters scraped around for food and water. They kept her alive, she said, until she could function again. "This was during Ramadan. We were kept in Nugra Salman for a few more months."

In September, when the war with Iran was over, Saddam issued a general amnesty to the Kurds, the people he believed had betrayed him by siding with Tehran. The women, children, and elderly in Nugra Salman were freed. But, in most cases, they could not go home; the Iraqi Army had bulldozed some forty thousand villages, Baban's among them. She was finally resettled in the Chamchamal district.

In the days after her release, she tried to learn the fate of her husband and three older sons. But the men who disappeared in the Anfal roundups have never been found. It is said that they were killed and then buried in mass graves in the desert along the Kuwaiti border, but little is actually known. A great number of Anfal widows, I was told, still believe that their sons and husbands and brothers are locked away in Saddam's jails. "We are thinking they are alive," Baban said, referring to her husband and sons. "Twenty-four hours a day, we are thinking maybe they are alive. If they are alive, they are being tortured, I know it."

Baban said that she has not slept well since her sons were taken from her. "We are thinking, Please let us know they are dead, I will sleep in peace," she said. "My head is filled with terrible thoughts. The day I die is the day I will not remember that the dogs ate my son."

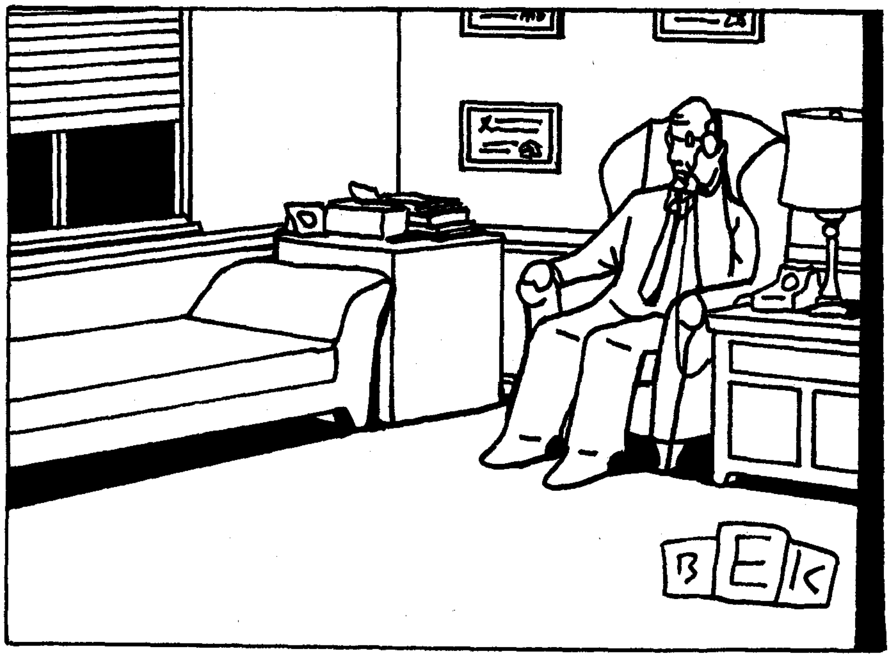
Before I left, Baban asked me to write down the names of her three older sons. They are Sherzad, who would be forty now; Rizgar, who would be thirty-one; and Muhammad, who would be thirty. She asked me to find her sons, or to ask President Bush to find them. "One would be sufficient," she said. "If just one comes back, that would be enough."

5. WHAT THE KURDS FEAR

In a conversation not long ago with Richard Butler, the former weapons inspector, I suggested a possible explanation for the world's indifference to Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons to commit genocide—that the people he had killed were his own citizens, not those of another sovereign state. (The main chemical-weapons treaty does not ban a country's use of such weapons against its own people, perhaps because at the time the convention was drafted no one could imagine such a thing.) Butler reminded me, however, that Iraq had used chemical weapons against another country—Iran—during the eight-year Iran-Iraq War. He offered a simpler rationale. "The problems are just too awful and too hard," he said. "History is replete with such things. Go back to the grand example of the Holocaust. It sounded too hard to do anything about it."

The Kurds have grown sanguine about the world's lack of interest. "I've learned not to be surprised by the indifference of the civilized world," Barham Salih told me one evening in Sulaimaniya. Salih is the Prime Minister of the area of Kurdistan administered by the Patriotic Union, and he spoke in such a way as to suggest that it would be best if I, too, stopped acting surprised. "Given the scale of the tragedy—we're talking about large numbers of victims—I suppose I'm surprised that the international community has not come in to help the survivors," he continued. "It's politically indecent not to help. But, as a Kurd, I live with the terrible hand history and geography have dealt my people."

Salih's home is not prime ministerial, but it has many Western comforts. He had a satellite television and a satellite telephone, yet the house was frigid; in a



"What a day! You wouldn't believe the hellacious archetypes I had to deal with."

land of cheap oil, the Kurds, who are cut off the Iraqi electric grid by Saddam on a regular basis, survive on generator power and kerosene heat.

Over dinner one night, Salih argued that the Kurds should not be regarded with pity. "I don't think one has to tap into the Wilsonian streak in American foreign policy in order to find a rationale for helping the Kurds," he said. "Helping the Kurds would mean an opportunity to study the problems caused by weapons of mass destruction."

Salih, who is forty-one, often speaks bluntly, and is savvy about Washington's enduring interest in ending the reign of Saddam Hussein. Unwilling publicly to exhort the United States to take military action, Salih is aware that the *peshmerga* would be obvious allies of an American military strike against Iraq; other Kurds have been making that argument for years. It is not often noted in Washington policy circles, but the Kurds already hold a vast swath of territory inside the country—including two important dams whose destruction could flood Baghdad—and have at least seventy thousand men under arms. In addition, the two main Kurdish parties are members of the Iraqi opposition group, the Iraqi National Congress, which is headed by Ahmad Chalabi, a London-based Shiite businessman; at the moment, though, relations between Chalabi and the Kurdish leaders are contentious.

Kurds I talked to throughout Kurdistan were enthusiastic about the idea of joining an American-led alliance against Saddam Hussein, and serving as the northern-Iraqi equivalent of Afghanistan's Northern Alliance. President Bush's State of the Union Message, in which he denounced Iraq as the linchpin of an "axis of evil," had had an electric effect on every Kurd I met who heard the speech. In the same speech, President Bush made reference to Iraq's murder of "thousands of its own citizens—leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children." General Simko Dizayee, the chief of staff of the *peshmerga*, told me, "Bush's speech filled our hearts with hope."

Prime Minister Salih expressed his views diplomatically. "We support democratic transformation in Iraq," he said—half smiling, because he knows that there is no chance of that occurring unless Saddam is removed. But until America commits itself to removing Saddam, he said, "we're living on the razor's edge. Before Washington even wakes up in the morning, we could have ten thousand dead." This is the Kurdish conundrum: the Iraqi military is weaker than the American military, but the Iraqis are stronger than the Kurds. Seven hundred Iraqi tanks face the Kurdish safe haven, according to *peshmerga* commanders.

General Mustafa Said Qadir, the *peshmerga* leader, put it this way: "We have a problem. If the Americans attack Saddam and don't get him, we're going to get gassed. If the Americans decided to do it, we would be thankful. This is the Kurdish dream. But it has to be done carefully."

The Kurdish leadership worries, in short, that an American mistake could cost the Kurds what they have created, however inadvertently: a nearly independent state for themselves in northern Iraq. "We would like to be our own nation," Salih told me. "But we are realists. All we want is to be partners of the Arabs of Iraq in building a secular, democratic, federal country." Later, he added, "We are proud of ourselves. We have inherited a devastated country. It's not easy what we are trying to achieve. We had no democratic institutions, we didn't have a legal culture, we did not have a strong military. From that situation, this is a remarkable success story."

The Kurdish regional government, to be sure, is not a Vermont town meeting. The leaders of the two parties, Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, are safe in their jobs. But there is a free press here, and separation of mosque and state, and schools are being built and pensions are being paid. In Erbil and in Sulaimaniya, the Kurds have built playgrounds on the ruins of Iraqi Army torture centers. "If America is indeed looking for Muslims who are eager to become democratic and are eager to counter the effects of Islamic fundamentalism, then it should be looking here," Salih said.

Massoud Barzani is the son of the late Mustafa Barzani, a legendary guerrilla, who built the Democratic Party, and who entered into the ill-fated alliance with Iran and America. I met Barzani in his headquarters, above the town of Salahuddin. He is a short man, pale and quiet; he wore the red turban of the Barzani clan and a wide cummerbund across his baggy trousers—the outfit of a *peshmerga*.

Like Salih, he chooses his words carefully when talking about the possibility of helping America bring down Saddam. "It is not enough to tell us the U.S. will respond at a certain time and place of its choosing," Barzani said. "We're in artillery range. Iraq's Army is weak, but it is still strong enough to crush us. We don't make assumptions about the American response."

One day, I drove to the Kurdish front lines near Erbil, to see the forward positions of the Iraqi Army. The border between the Army-controlled territory and the Kurdish region is porous; Baghdad allows some Kurds—nonpolitical Kurds—to travel back and forth between zones.

My *peshmerga* escort took me to the roof of a building overlooking the Kalak Bridge and, beyond it, the Iraqi lines. Without binoculars, we could see Iraqi tanks on the hills in front of us. A local official named Muhammad Najar joined us; he told me that the Iraqi forces arrayed there were elements of the Army's Jerusalem brigade, a reserve unit established by Saddam with the stated purpose of liberating Jerusalem from the Israelis. Other *peshmerga* joined us. It was a brilliantly sunny day, and we were enjoying the weather. A man named Aziz Khader, gazing at the plain before us, said, "When I look across here, I imagine American tanks coming down across this plain going to Baghdad." His friends smiled and said, "*Inshallah*"—God willing. Another man said, "The U.S. is the lord of the world."

6. THE PRISONERS

A week later, I was at Shinwe, a mountain range outside Halabja, with another group of *peshmerga*. My escorts and I had driven most of the way up, and then slogged through fresh snow. From one peak, we could see the village of Biyara, which sits in a valley between Halabja and a wall of mountains that mark the Iranian border. Saddam's tanks were an hour's drive away to the south, and Iran filled the vista before us. Biyara and nine other villages near it are occupied by the terrorist group Ansar al-Islam, or Supporters of Islam. Shinwe, in fact, might be called the axis of the axis of evil.

We were close enough to see trucks belonging to Ansar al-Islam making their way from village to village. The commander of the *peshmerga* forces surrounding Biyara, a veteran guerrilla named Ramadan Dekone, said that Ansar al-Islam is made up of Kurdish Islamists and an unknown number of so-called Arab Afghans—Arabs, from southern Iraq and elsewhere, who trained in the camps of Al Qaeda.

"They believe that people must be terrorized," Dekone said, shaking his head. "They believe that the Koran says this is permissible." He pointed to an abandoned village in the middle distance, a place called Kheli Hama. "That is where the massacre took place," he said. In late September, forty-two of his men were killed by Ansar al-Islam, and now Dekone and his forces seemed ready for revenge. I asked him what he would do if he captured the men responsible for the killing.

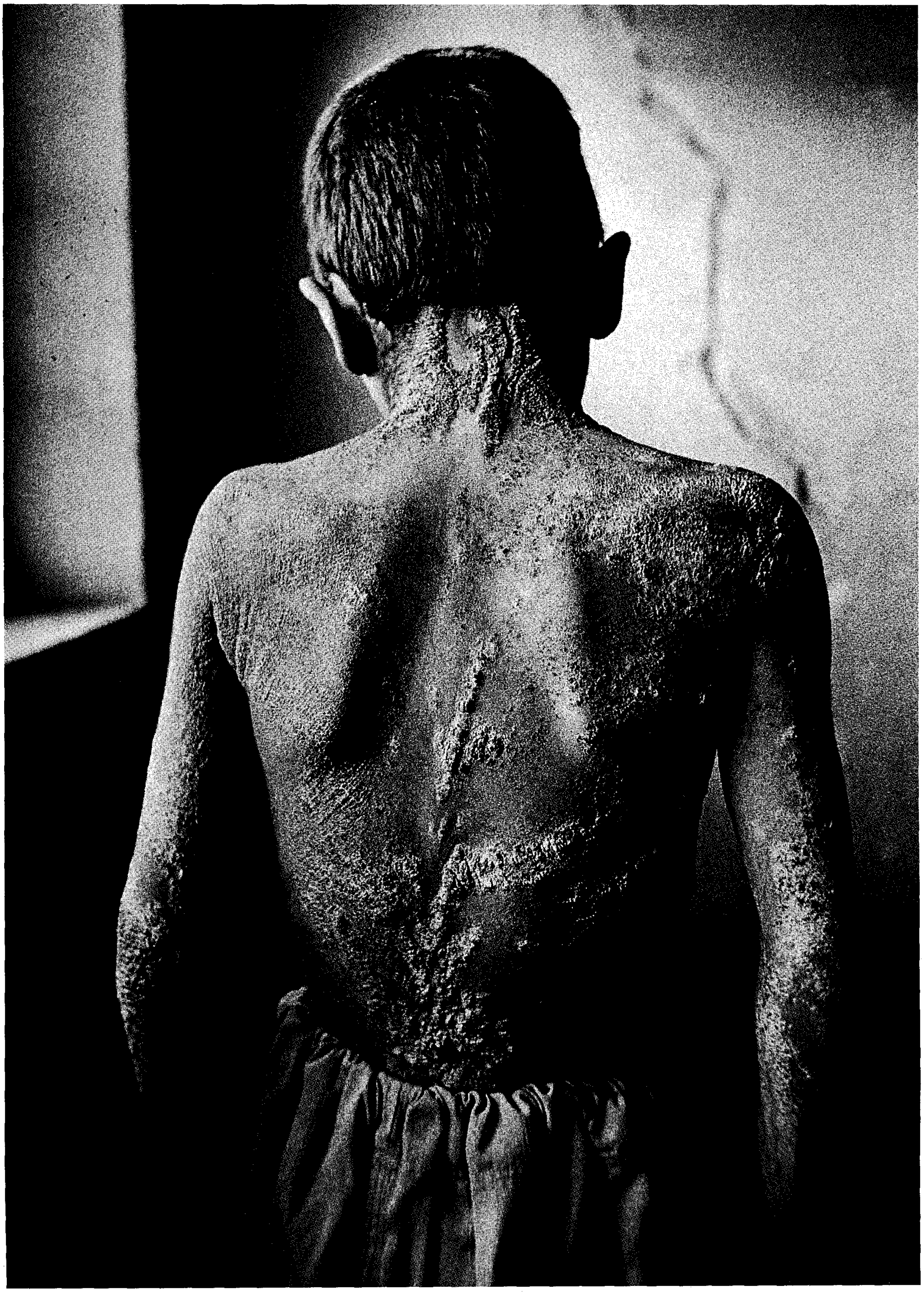
"I would take them to court," he said.

When I got to Sulaimaniya, I visited a prison run by the intelligence service of the Patriotic Union. The prison is attached to the intelligence-service headquarters. It appears to be well kept and humane; the communal cells hold twenty or so men each, and they have kerosene heat, and even satellite television. For two days, the intelligence agency permitted me to speak with any prisoner who agreed to be interviewed. I was wary; the Kurds have an obvious interest in lining up on the American side in the war against terror. But the officials did not, as far as I know, compel anyone to speak to me, and I did not get the sense that allegations made by prisoners were shaped by their captors. The stories, which I later checked with experts on the region, seemed at least worth the attention of America and other countries in the West.

The allegations include charges that Ansar al-Islam has received funds directly from Al Qaeda; that the intelligence service of Saddam Hussein has joint control, with Al Qaeda operatives, over Ansar al-Islam; that Saddam Hussein hosted a senior leader of Al Qaeda in Baghdad in 1992; that a number of Al Qaeda members fleeing Afghanistan have been secretly brought into territory controlled by Ansar al-Islam; and that Iraqi intelligence agents smuggled conventional weapons, and possibly even chemical and biological weapons, into Afghanistan. If these charges are true, it would mean that the relationship between Saddam's regime and Al Qaeda is far closer than previously thought.

When I asked the director of the

"This is Larry. He's new no-money."



Jusim Muhammad, an eight-year-old victim of a chemical attack in Halabja. Photograph by Martin Pope.

twenty-four-hundred-man Patriotic Union intelligence service why he was allowing me to interview his prisoners, he told me that he hoped I would carry this information to American intelligence officials. "The F.B.I. and the C.I.A. haven't come out yet," he told me. His deputy added, "Americans are going to Somalia, the Philippines, I don't know where else, to look for terrorists. But this is the field, here." Anya Guilsher, a spokeswoman for the C.I.A., told me last week that as a matter of policy the agency would not comment on the activities of its officers. James Woolsey, a former C.I.A. director and an advocate of overthrowing the Iraqi regime, said, "It would be a real shame if the C.I.A.'s substantial institutional hostility to Iraqi democratic resistance groups was keeping it from learning about Saddam's ties to Al Qaeda in northern Iraq."

The possibility that Saddam could supply weapons of mass destruction to anti-American terror groups is a powerful argument among advocates of "regime change," as the removal of Saddam is known in Washington. These critics of Saddam argue that his chemical and biological capabilities, his record of support for terrorist organizations, and the cruelty of his regime make him a threat that reaches far beyond the citizens of Iraq.

"He's the home address for anyone wanting to make or use chemical or biological weapons," Kanan Makiya, an Iraqi dissident, said. Makiya is the author of "Republic of Fear," a study of Saddam's regime. "He's going to be the person to worry about. He's got the labs and the know-how. He's hellbent on trying to find a way into the fight, without announcing it."

On the surface, a marriage of Saddam's secular Baath Party regime with the fundamentalist Al Qaeda seems unlikely. His relationship with secular Palestinian groups is well known; both Abu Nidal and Abul Abbas, two prominent Palestinian terrorists, are currently believed to be in Baghdad. But about ten years ago Saddam underwent something of a battlefield conversion to a fundamentalist brand of Islam.

"It was gradual, starting the moment he decided on the invasion of Kuwait," in June of 1990, according to Amatzia Baram, an Iraq expert at the University of Haifa. "His calculation was that he needed people in Iraq and the Arab world—as well as God—to be on his side when he invaded. After he invaded, the Islamic rhetorical style became overwhelming"—so overwhelming, Baram continued, that a radical group in Jordan began calling Saddam "the New Caliph Marching from the East." This conversion, cynical though it may be, has opened doors to Saddam in the fundamentalist world. He is now a prime supporter of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and of Hamas, paying families of suicide bombers ten thousand dollars in exchange for their sons' martyrdom. This is part of Saddam's attempt to harness the power of Islamic extremism and direct it against his enemies.

KATZ/SABA

Kurdish culture, on the other hand, has traditionally been immune to religious extremism. According to Kurdish officials, Ansar al-Islam grew out of an idea spread by Ayman al-Zawahiri, the former chief of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and now Osama bin Laden's deputy in Al Qaeda. "There are two schools of thought" in Al Qaeda, Karim Sinjari, the Interior Minister of Kurdistan's Democratic Party-controlled region, told me. "Osama bin Laden believes that the infidels should be beaten in the head, meaning the United States. Zawahiri's philosophy is that you should fight the infidel even in the smallest village, that you should try to form Islamic armies everywhere. The Kurdish fundamentalists were influenced by Zawahiri."

Kurds were among those who travelled to Afghanistan from all over the Muslim world, first to fight the Soviets, in the early nineteen-eighties, then to join Al Qaeda. The members of the groups that eventually became Ansar al-Islam spent a great deal of time in Afghanistan, according to Kurdish intelligence officials. One Kurd who went to Afghanistan was Mala Krekar, an early leader of the Islamist movement in Kurdistan; according to Sinjari, he now holds the title of "emir" of Ansar al-Islam.

In 1998, the first force of Islamist terrorists crossed the Iranian border into Kurdistan, and immediately tried to seize the town of Haj Omran. Kurdish officials said that the terrorists were helped by Iran, which also has an interest in undermining a secular Muslim government. "The terrorists blocked the road, they killed Kurdish Democratic Party cadres, they threatened the villagers," Sinjari said. "We fought them and they fled."

The terrorist groups splintered repeatedly. According to a report in the Arabic newspaper *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, which is published in London, Ansar al-Islam came into being, on September 1st of last year, with the merger of two factions: Al Tawhid, which helped to arrange the assassination of Kurdistan's most prominent Christian politician, and whose operatives initiated an acid-throwing campaign against unveiled women; and a faction called the Second Soran Unit, which had been affiliated with one of the Kurdish Islamic parties. In a statement issued to mark the merger, the group, which originally called itself Jund al-Islam, or Soldiers of Islam, declared its intention to "undertake jihad in this region" in order to carry out "God's will." According to Kurdish officials, the group had between five hundred and six hundred members, including Arab Afghans and at least thirty Iraqi Kurds who were trained in Afghanistan.

Kurdish officials say that the merger took place in a ceremony overseen by three Arabs trained in bin Laden's camps in Afghanistan, and that these men supplied Ansar al-Islam with three hundred thousand dollars in seed money. Soon after the merger, a unit of Ansar al-Islam called the Victory Squad attacked and killed the *peshmerga* in Kheli Hama.

Among the Islamic fighters who were there that day was Rekut Hiwa Hussein, a slender, boyish twenty-year-old who was captured by the *peshmerga* after the massacre, and whom I met in the prison in Sulaimaniya. He was exceedingly shy, never looking up from his hands as he spoke. He was not handcuffed, and had no marks on the visible parts of his body. We were seated in an investigator's office inside the intelligence complex. Like most buildings in Sulaimaniya, this one was warmed by a single kerosene heater, and the room temperature seemed barely above freezing. Rekut told me how he and his comrades in Ansar al-Islam overcame the *peshmerga*.

"They thought there was a ceasefire, so we came into the village and fired on them by surprise," he said. "They didn't know what happened. We used grenades and machine guns. We killed a lot of them and then the others surrendered." The terrorists trussed their prisoners, ignoring pleas from the few civilians remaining in the town to leave them alone. "The villagers asked us not to slaughter them," Rekut said. One of the leaders of Ansar al-Islam, a man named Abdullah al-Shafi, became incensed. "He said, 'Who is saying this? Let me kill them.' "

Rekut said that the *peshmerga* were killed in ritual fashion: "We put cloths in their mouths. We then laid them down like sheep, in a line. Then we cut their throats." After the men were killed, *peshmerga* commanders say, the corpses were beheaded. Rekut denied this. "Some of their heads had been blown off by grenades, but we didn't behead them," he said.

I asked Rekut why he had joined Ansar al-Islam. "A friend of mine joined," he said quietly. "I don't have a good reason why I joined." A guard then took him by the elbow and returned him to his cell.

The Kurdish intelligence officials I spoke to were careful not to oversell their case; they said that they have no proof that Ansar al-Islam was ever involved in international terrorism or that Saddam's agents were involved in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. But they do have proof, they said, that Ansar al-Islam is shielding Al Qaeda members, and that it is doing so with the approval of Saddam's agents.

Kurdish officials said that, according to their intelligence, several men associated with Al Qaeda have been smuggled over the Iranian border into an Ansar al-Islam stronghold near Halabja. The Kurds believe that two of them, who go by the names Abu Yasir and Abu Muzaham, are high-ranking Al Qaeda members. "We don't have any information about them," one official told me. "We know that they don't want anybody to see them. They are sleeping in the same room as Mala Krekar and Abdullah al-Shafi"—the nominal leaders of Ansar al-Islam.

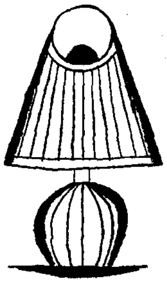
The real leader, these officials say, is an Iraqi who goes by the name Abu Wa'el, and who, like the others, spent a great deal of time in bin Laden's training camps. But he is also, they say, a high-ranking officer of the Mukhabarat. One senior official added, "A man named Abu Agab is in charge of the northern bureau of the Mukhabarat. And he is Abu Wa'el's control officer."

Abu Agab, the official said, is based in the city of Kirkuk, which is predominantly Kurdish but is under the control of Baghdad. According to intelligence officials, Abu Agab and Abu Wa'el met last July 7th, in Germany. From there, they say, Abu Wa'el travelled to Afghanistan and then, in August, to Kurdistan, sneaking across the Iranian border.

The Kurdish officials told me that they learned a lot about Abu Wa'el's movements from one of their prisoners, an Iraqi intelligence officer named Qassem Hussein Muhammad, and they invited me to speak with him. Qassem, the Kurds said, is a Shiite from Basra, in southern Iraq, and a twenty-year veteran of Iraqi intelligence.

Qassem, shambling and bearded, was brought into the room, and he genially agreed to be interviewed. One guard stayed in the room, along with my translator. Qassem lit a cigarette, and leaned back in his chair. I started by asking him if he had been tortured by his captors. His eyes widened. "By God, no," he said. "There is nothing like torture here." Then he told me that his involvement in Islamic radicalism began in 1992 in Baghdad, when he met Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Qassem said that he was one of seventeen bodyguards assigned to protect Zawahiri, who stayed at Baghdad's Al Rashid Hotel, but who, he said, moved around surreptitiously. The guards had no idea why Zawahiri was in Baghdad, but one day Qassem escorted him to one of Saddam's palaces for what he later learned was a meeting with Saddam himself.



Qassem's capture by the Kurds grew out of his last assignment from the Mukhabarat. The Iraqi intelligence service received word that Abu Wa'el had been captured by American agents. "I was sent by the Mukhabarat to Kurdistan to find Abu Wa'el or, at least, information about him," Qassem told me. "That's when I was captured, before I reached Biyara."

I asked him if he was sure that Abu Wa'el was on Saddam's side. "He's an employee of the Mukhabarat," Qassem said. "He's the actual decision-maker in the group"—Ansar al-Islam—"but he's an employee of the Mukhabarat." According to the Kurdish intelligence officials, Abu Wa'el is not in American hands; rather, he is still with Ansar al-Islam. American officials declined to comment.

The Kurdish intelligence officials told me that they have Al Qaeda members in custody, and they introduced me to another prisoner, a young Iraqi Arab named Haqi Ismail, whom they described as a middle- to high-ranking member of Al Qaeda. He was, they said, captured by the *peshmerga* as he tried to get into Kurdistan three weeks after the start of the American attack on Afghanistan. Ismail, they said, comes from a Mosul family with deep connections to the Mukhabarat; his uncle is the top Mukhabarat official in the south of Iraq. They said they believe that Haqi Ismail is a liaison between Saddam's intelligence service and Al Qaeda.

Ismail wore slippers and a blanket around his shoulders. He was ascetic in appearance and, at the same time, ostentatiously smug. He appeared to be amused by the presence of an American. He told the investigators that he would not talk to the C.I.A. The Kurdish investigators laughed and said they wished that I were from the C.I.A.

Ismail said that he was once a student at the University of Mosul but grew tired of life in Iraq under Saddam Hussein. Luckily, he said, in 1999 he met an Afghan man who persuaded him to seek work in Afghanistan. The Kurdish investigators smiled as Ismail went on to say that he found himself in Kandahar, then in Kabul, and then somehow—here he was exceedingly vague—

in an Al Qaeda camp. When I asked him how enrollment in an Al Qaeda camp squared with his wish to seek work in Afghanistan, he replied, "Being a soldier is a job." After his training, he said, he took a post in the Taliban Foreign Ministry. I asked him if he was an employee of Saddam's intelligence service. "I prefer not to talk about that," he replied.

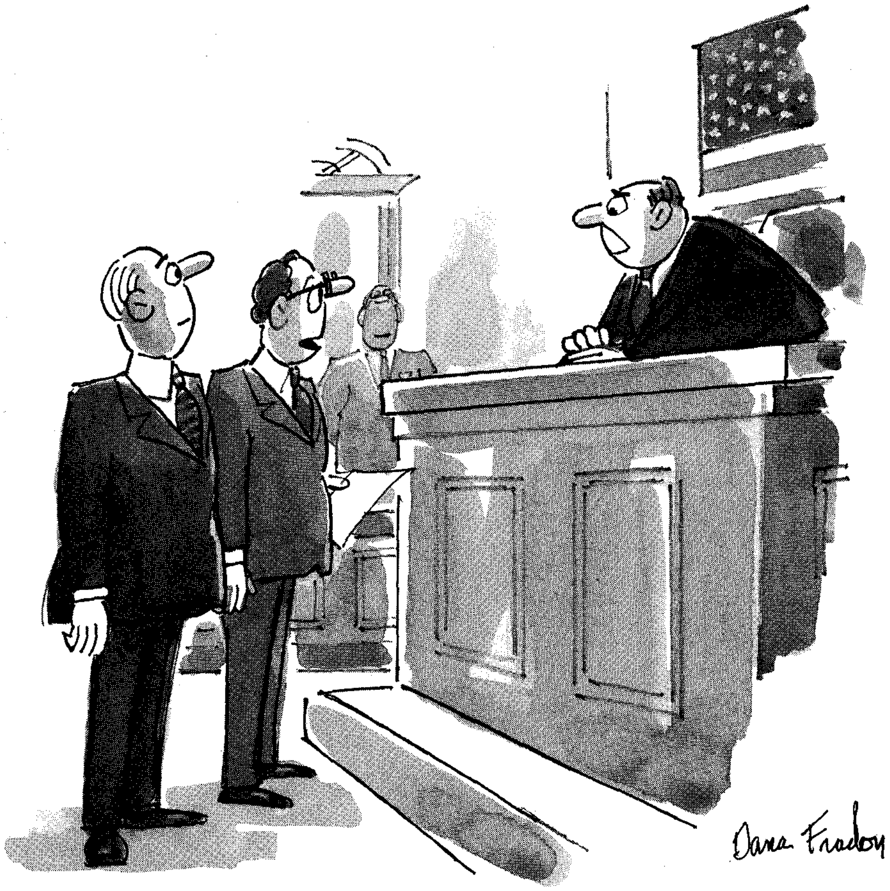
Later, I asked the Kurdish officials if they believed that Saddam provides aid to Al Qaeda-affiliated terror groups or simply maintains channels of communication with them. It was getting late, and the room was growing even colder. "Come back tomorrow," the senior official in the room said, "and we'll introduce you to someone who will answer that question."

7. THE AL QAEDA LINK

The man they introduced me to the next afternoon was a twenty-nine-year-old Iranian Arab, a smuggler and bandit from the city of Ahvaz. The intelligence officials told me that his most recent employer was bin Laden. When they arrested him, last year, they said, they found a roll of film in his possession. They had the film developed, and the photographs, which they showed me, depicted their prisoner murdering a man with a knife, slicing his ear off and then plunging the knife into the top of the man's head.

The Iranian had a thin face, thick black hair, and a mustache; he wore an army jacket, sandals, and Western-style sweatpants. Speaking in an almost casual tone, he told me that he was born in 1973, that his real name was Muhammad Mansour Shahab, and that he had been a smuggler most of his adult life.

"I met a group of drug traffickers," he said. "They gave us drugs and we got them weapons," which they took from Iran into Afghanistan. In 1996, he met an Arab Afghan. "His name was Othman," the man went on. "He gave me drugs, and I got him a hundred and fifty Kalashnikovs. Then he said to me, 'You should come visit Afghanistan.' So we went to Afghanistan in 1996. We stayed for a while, I came back, did a lot of smuggling jobs. My brother-in-law tried to send weapons to Afghanistan, but the Iranians ambushed us. I killed some of the Iranians."

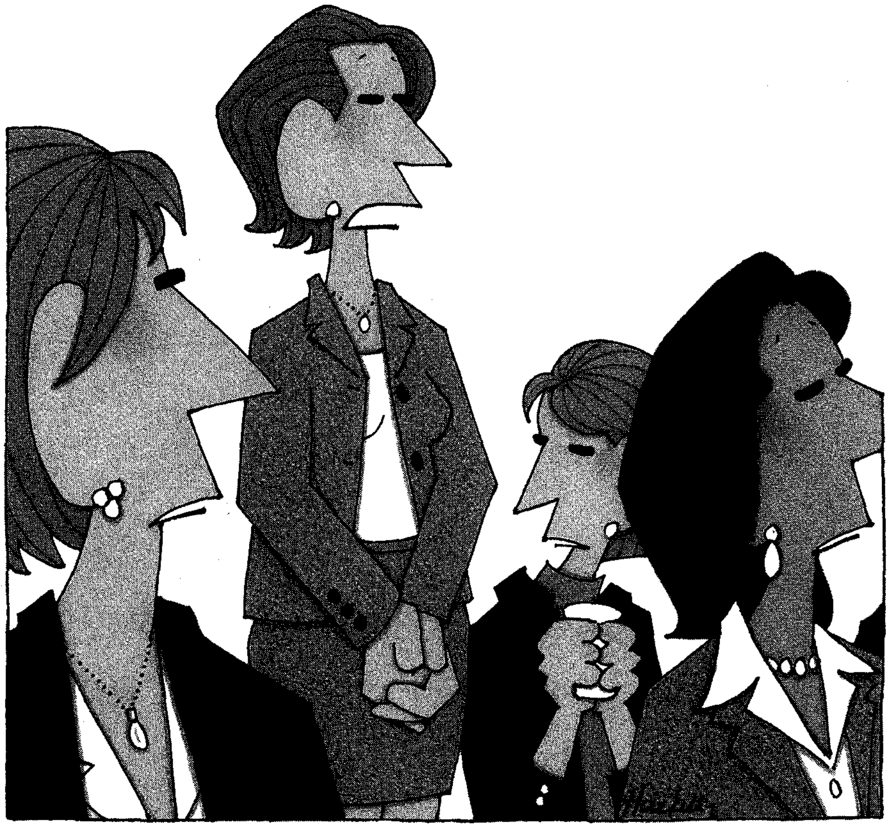


"Your Honor, my client would like to be tried offshore."

He soon returned with Othman to Afghanistan, where, he said, Othman gave him the name Muhammad Jawad to use while he was there. "Othman said to me, 'You will meet Sheikh Osama soon.' We were in Kandahar. One night, they gave me a sleeping pill. We got into a car and we drove for an hour and a half into the mountains. We went to a tent they said was Osama's tent." The man now called Jawad did not meet Osama bin Laden that night. "They said to me, 'You're the guy who killed the Iranian officer.' Then they said they needed information about me, my real name. They told Othman to take me back to Kandahar and hold me in jail for twenty-one days while they investigated me."

The Al Qaeda men completed their investigation and called him back to the mountains. "They told me that Osama said I should work with them," Jawad said. "They told me to bring my wife to Afghanistan." They made him swear on a Koran that he would never betray them. Jawad said that he became one of Al Qaeda's principal weapons smugglers. Iraqi opposition sources told me that the Baghdad regime frequently smuggled weapons to Al Qaeda by air through Dubai to Pakistan and then overland into Afghanistan. But Jawad told me that the Iraqis often used land routes through Iran as well. Othman ordered him to establish a smuggling route across the Iraq-Iran border. The smugglers would pose as shepherds to find the best routes. "We started to go into Iraq with the sheep and cows," Jawad told me, and added that they initiated this route by smuggling tape recorders from Iraq to Iran. They opened a store, a front, in Ahvaz, to sell electronics, "just to establish relationships with smugglers."

One day in 1999, Othman got a message to Jawad, who was then in Iran. He was to smuggle himself across the Iraqi border at Fao, where a car would meet him and take him to a village near Tikrit, the headquarters of Saddam Hussein's



"At first, collecting husbands seemed a harmless hobby."

• •

clan. Jawad was then taken to a meeting at the house of a man called Luay, whom he described as the son of Saddam's father-in-law, Khayr Allah Talfah. (Professor Baram, who has long followed Saddam's family, later told me he believes that Luay, who is about forty years old, is close to Saddam's inner circle.) At the meeting, with Othman present, Mukhabarat officials instructed Jawad to go to Baghdad, where he was to retrieve several cannisters filled with explosives. Then, he said, he was to arrange to smuggle the explosives into Iran, where they would be used to kill anti-Iraqi activists. After this assignment was completed, Jawad said, he was given a thousand Kalashnikov rifles by Iraqi intelligence and told to smuggle them into Afghanistan.

A year later, there was a new development: Othman told Jawad to smuggle several dozen refrigerator motors into Afghanistan for the Iraqi Mukhabarat; a cannister filled with liquid was attached to each motor. Jawad said that he asked Othman for more information. "I said, 'Othman, what does this contain?' He said, 'My life and your life.' He said they"—the Iraqi agents—"were going to kill us if we didn't do this. That's all I'll say.

"I was given a book of dollars," Jawad went on, meaning ten thousand dollars—a hundred American hundred-dollar bills. "I was told to arrange to smuggle the motors. Othman told me to kill any of the smugglers who helped us once we got there." Vehicles belonging to the Taliban were waiting at the border, and Jawad said that he turned over the liquid-filled refrigerator motors to the Taliban, and then killed the smugglers who had helped him.

Jawad said that he had no idea what liquid was inside the motors, but he assumed that it was some type of chemical or biological weapon. I asked the Kurdish officials who remained in the room if they believed that, as late as 2000, the Mukhabarat was transferring chemical or biological weapons to Al Qaeda. They spoke carefully. "We have no idea what was in the cannisters," the senior official said. "This is something that is worth an American investigation."

When I asked Jawad to tell me why he worked for Al Qaeda, he replied, "Money." He would not say how much money he had been paid, but he suggested that it was quite a bit. I had one more question: How many years has Al Qaeda maintained a relationship with Saddam Hussein's regime? "There's been a relationship between the Mukhabarat and the people of Al Qaeda since 1992," he replied.

Carole O'Leary, a Middle Eastern expert at American University, in Washington, and a specialist on the Kurds, said it is likely that Saddam would seek an alliance with Islamic terrorists to serve his own interests. "I know that there are Mukhabarat agents throughout Kurdistan," O'Leary said, and went on, "One way the Mukhabarat could destabilize the Kurdish experiment in democracy is to link up with Islamic radical groups. Their interests dovetail completely. They both have much to fear from the democratic, secular experiment of the Kurds in the safe haven, and they both obviously share a hatred for America."

8. THE PRESENT DANGER

A paradox of life in northern Iraq is that, while hundreds, perhaps thousands, of children suffer from the effects of chemical attacks, the child-mortality rate in the Kurdish zone has improved over the past ten years. Prime Minister Salih credits this to, of all things, sanctions placed on the Iraqi regime by the United Nations after the Gulf War because of Iraq's refusal to dismantle its nonconventional-weapons program. He credits in particular the program begun in 1997, known as oil-for-food, which was meant to mitigate the effects of sanctions on civilians by allowing the profits from Iraqi oil sales to buy food and medicine. Calling this program a "fantastic concept," Salih said, "For the first time in our history, Iraqi citizens—all citizens—are insured a portion of the country's oil wealth. The north is a testament to the success of the program. Oil is sold and food is bought."

I asked Salih to respond to the criticism, widely aired in the West, that the sanctions have led to the death of thousands of children. "Sanctions don't kill Iraqi children," he said. "The regime kills children."

This puzzled me. If it was true, then why were the victims of the gas attacks still suffering from a lack of health care? Across Kurdistan, in every hospital I visited, the complaints were the same: no CT scans, no MRIs, no pediatric surgery, no advanced diagnostic equipment, not even surgical gloves. I asked Salih why the money designated by the U.N. for the Kurds wasn't being used for advanced medical treatment. The oil-for-food program has one enormous flaw, he replied. When the program was introduced, the Kurds were promised thirteen per cent of the country's oil revenue, but because of the terms of the agreement between Baghdad and the U.N.—a "defect," Salih said—the government controls the flow of food, medicine, and medical equipment to the very people it slaughtered. Food does arrive, he conceded, and basic medicines as well, but at Saddam's pace.

On this question of the work of the United Nations and its agencies, the rival Kurdish parties agree. "We've been asking for a four-hundred-bed hospital for Sulaimaniya for three years," said Nerchivan Barzani, the Prime Minister of the region controlled by the Kurdish Democratic Party, and Salih's counterpart. Sulaimaniya is in Salih's territory, but in this case geography doesn't matter. "It's our money," Barzani said. "But we need the approval of the Iraqis. They get to decide. The World Health Organization is taking its orders from the Iraqis. It's crazy."

Barzani and Salih accused the World Health Organization, in particular, of rewarding with lucrative contracts only companies favored by Saddam. "Every time I interact with the U.N.," Salih said, "I think, My God, Jesse Helms is right. If the U.N. can't help us, this poor, dispossessed Muslim nation, then who is it for?"

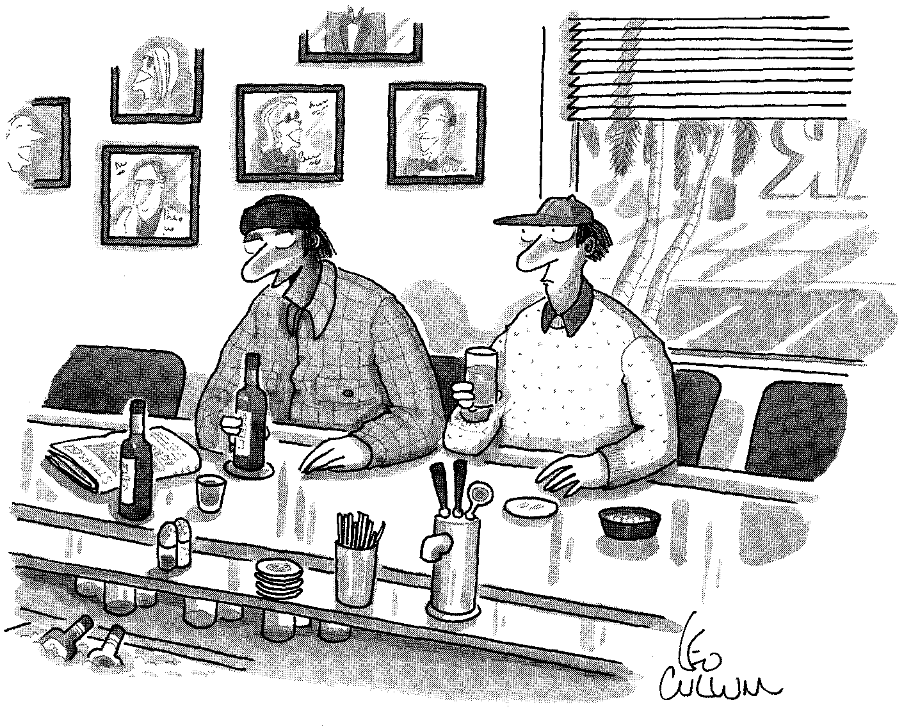
Many Kurds believe that Iraq's friends in the U.N. system, particularly members of the Arab bloc, have worked to keep the Kurds' cause from being addressed. The Kurds face an institutional disadvantage at the U.N., where, unlike the Palestinians, they have not even been granted official observer status. Salih grew acerbic: "Compare us to other liberation movements around the world. We are very mature. We don't engage in terror. We don't condone extremist nationalist notions that can only burden our people. Please compare what we have achieved in the Kurdistan national-authority areas to the Palestinian national authority of Mr. Arafat. We have spent the last ten years building a secular, democratic society, a civil society. What has he built?"

Last week, in New York, I met with Benon Sevan, the United Nations undersecretary-general who oversees the oil-for-food program. He quickly let me know that he was unmoved by the demands of the Kurds. "If they had a theme song, it would be 'Give Me, Give Me, Give Me,'" Sevan said. "I'm getting fed up with their complaints. You can tell them that." He said that under the oil-for-food program the "three northern governorates"—U.N. officials avoid the word "Kurdistan"—have been allocated billions of dollars in goods and services. "I don't know if they've ever had it so good," he said.

I mentioned the Kurds' complaint that they have been denied access to advanced medical equipment, and he said, "Nobody prevents them from asking. They should go ask the World Health Organization"—which reports to Sevan on matters related to Iraq. When I told Sevan that the Kurds have repeatedly asked the W.H.O., he said, "I'm not going to pass judgment on the W.H.O." As the interview ended, I asked Sevan about the morality of allowing the Iraqi regime to control the flow of food and medicine into Kurdistan. "Nobody's innocent," he said. "Please don't talk about morals with me."

When I went to Kurdistan in January to report on the 1988 genocide of the Kurds, I did not expect to be sidetracked by a debate over U.N. sanctions. And I certainly didn't expect to be sidetracked by crimes that Saddam is committing against the Kurds now—in particular "nationality correction," the law that Saddam's security services are using to implement a campaign of ethnic cleansing. Large-scale operations against the Kurds in Kirkuk, a city southeast of Erbil, and in other parts of Iraqi Kurdistan under Saddam's control, have received scant press attention in the West; there have been few news accounts and no Security Council condemnations drafted in righteous anger.

Saddam's security services have been demanding that Kurds "correct" their nationality by signing papers to indi-



"I'm very proud. Someone I've been stalking has been nominated for an Academy Award."

cate that their birth records are false—that they are in fact Arab. Those who don't sign have their property seized. Many have been evicted, often to Kurdish-controlled regions, to make room for Arab families. According to both the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, more than a hundred thousand Kurds have been expelled from the Kirkuk area over the past two years.

Nationality correction is one technique that the Baghdad regime is using in an over-all "Arabization" campaign, whose aim is to replace the inhabitants of Kurdish cities, especially the oil-rich Kirkuk, with Arabs from central and southern Iraq, and even, according to persistent reports, with Palestinians. Arabization is not new, Peter Galbraith, a professor at the National Defense University and a former senior adviser to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, says. Galbraith has monitored Saddam's anti-Kurdish activities since before the Gulf War. "It's been going on for twenty years," he told me. "Maybe it's picked up speed, but it is certainly nothing new. To my mind, it's part of a larger process that has been under way for many years, and is aimed at reducing the territory occupied by the Kurds and at destroying rural Kurdistan."

"This is the apotheosis of cultural genocide," said Saedi Barzinji, the president of Salahaddin University, in Erbil, who is a human-rights lawyer and Massoud Barzani's legal adviser. Barzinji and other Kurdish leaders believe that Saddam is trying to set up a buffer zone between Arab Iraq and Kurdistan, just in case the Kurds win their independence. To help with this, Barzinji told me last month, Saddam is trying to rewrite Kirkuk's history, to give it an "Arab" past. If Kurds, Barzinji went on, "don't change their ethnic origin, they are given no food rations, no positions in government, no right to register the names of their new babies. In the last three to four weeks, hospitals have been ordered, the maternity wards ordered, not to register any Kurdish name." New parents are "obliged to choose an Arab name." Barzinji said that the nationality-correction campaign extends even to the dead. "Saddam is razing the gravestones, erasing the past, putting in new ones with Arab names," he said. "He wants to show that Kirkuk has always been Arab."

Some of the Kurds crossing the demarcation line between Saddam's forces and the Kurdish zone, it is said, are not being expelled but are fleeing for economic reasons. But in camps across Kurdistan I met refugees who told me stories of visits from the secret police in the middle of the night.

Many of the refugees from Kirkuk live in tent camps built on boggy fields. I visited one such camp at Beneslawa, not far from Erbil, where the mud was so thick that it nearly pulled off my shoes. The people at the camp—several hundred, according to two estimates I heard—are ragged and sick. A man named Howar told me that his suffering could not have been avoided even if he had agreed to change his ethnic identity.

"When you agree to change your nationality, the police write on your identity documents 'second-degree Arab,' which they know means Kurd," he told me. "So they always know you're a Kurd." (In a twist characteristic of Saddam's regime, Kurdish leaders told me, Kurds who agree to "change" their nationality are fined for having once claimed falsely to be Kurdish.)

Another refugee, Shawqat Hamid Muhammad, said that her son had gone to jail for two months for having a photograph of Mustafa Barzani in his possession. She said that she and her family had been in the Beneslawa camp for two months. "The police came and knocked on our door and told us we have to leave Kirkuk," she said. "We had to rent a truck to take our things out. We were given one day to leave. We have no idea who is in our house." Another refugee, a man named Ibrahim Jamil, wandered over to listen to the conversation. "The Arabs are winning Kirkuk," he said. "Soon the only people there will be Arabs, and Kurds who call themselves Arabs. They say we should be Arab. But I'm a Kurd. It would be easier for me to die than be an Arab. How can I not be a Kurd?"

Peter Galbraith told me that in 1987 he witnessed the destruction of Kurdish villages and cemeteries—"anything that was related to Kurdish identity," he said. "This was one of the factors that led me to conclude that it is a policy of genocide, a crime of intent, destroying a group whole or in part."

9. IRAQ'S ARMS RACE

In a series of meetings in the summer and fall of 1995, Charles Duelfer, the deputy executive chairman of the United Nations Special Commission, or UNSCOM—the now defunct arms-inspection team—met in Baghdad with Iraqi government delegations. The subject was the status of Iraq's nonconventional-weapons programs, and Duelfer, an American diplomat on loan to the United Nations, was close to a breakthrough.

In early August, Saddam's son-in-law Hussein Kamel had defected to Jordan, and had then spoken publicly about Iraq's offensive biological, chemical, and nuclear capabilities. (Kamel later returned to Iraq and was killed almost immediately, on his father-in-law's orders.) The regime's credibility was badly damaged by Kamel's revelations, and during these meetings the Iraqi representatives decided to tell Duelfer and his team more than they had ever revealed before. "This was the first time Iraq actually agreed to discuss the Presidential origins of these programs," Duelfer recalled. Among the most startling admissions made by the Iraqi scientists was that they had weaponized the biological agent aflatoxin.

Aflatoxin, which is produced from types of fungi that occur in moldy grains, is the biological agent that some Kurdish physicians suspect was mixed with chemical weapons and dropped on Kurdistan. Christine Gosden, the English geneticist, told me, "There is absolutely no forensic evidence whatsoever that aflatoxins have ever been used in northern Iraq, but this may be because no systematic testing has been carried out in the region, to my knowledge."

Duelfer told me, "We kept pressing the Iraqis to discuss the concept of use for aflatoxin. We learned that the origin of the biological-weapons program is in the security services, not in the military—meaning that it really came out of the assassinations program." The Iraqis, Duelfer said, admitted something else: they had loaded aflatoxin into two Scud-ready warheads, and also mixed aflatoxin with tear gas. They wouldn't say why.

In an op-ed article that Duelfer wrote for the Los Angeles *Times* last year about Iraqi programs to develop weapons of mass destruction, he offered this hypothesis: "If a regime wished to conceal a biological attack, what better way than this? Victims would suffer the short-term effects of inhaling tear gas and would assume that this was the totality of the attack: Subsequent cancers would not be linked to the prior event."

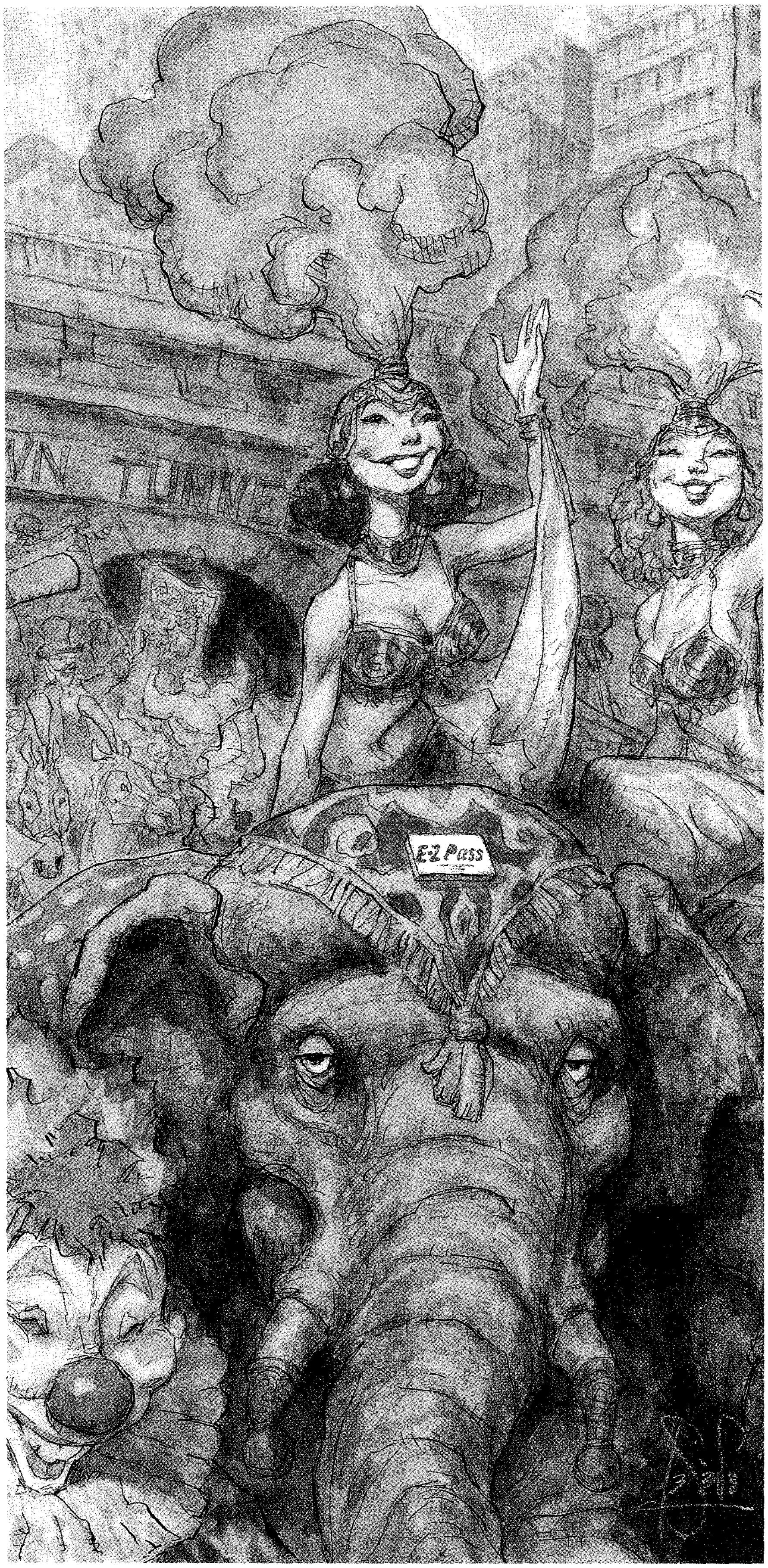
United Nations inspectors were alarmed to learn about the aflatoxin program. Richard Spertzel, the chief biological-weapons inspector for UNSCOM, put it this way: "It is a devilish weapon. Iraq was quite clearly aware of the long-term carcinogenic effect of aflatoxin. Aflatoxin can only do one thing—destroy people's livers. And I suspect that children are more susceptible. From a moral standpoint, aflatoxin is the cruellest weapon—it means watching children die slowly of liver cancer."

Spertzel believes that if aflatoxin were to be used as a weapon it would not be delivered by a missile. "Aflatoxin is a little tricky," he said. "I don't know if a single dose at one point in time is going to give you the long-term effects. Continuous, repeated exposure—through food—would be more effective." When I asked Spertzel if other countries have weaponized aflatoxin, he replied, "I don't know any other country that did it. I don't know any country that would."

It is unclear what biological and chemical weapons Saddam possesses today. When he maneuvered UNSCOM out of his country in 1998, weapons inspectors had found a sizable portion of his arsenal but were vexed by what they couldn't find. His scientists certainly have produced and weaponized anthrax, and they have manufactured botulinum toxin, which causes muscular paralysis and death. They've made *Clostridium perfringens*, a bacterium that causes gas gangrene, a condition in which the flesh rots. They have also made wheat-cover smut, which can be used to poison crops, and ricin, which, when absorbed into the lungs, causes hemorrhagic pneumonia.

According to Gary Milhollin, the director of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, whose Iraq

THE CIRCUS IS BACK BY PETER DE SÈVE



Watch project monitors Saddam's weapons capabilities, inspectors could not account for a great deal of weaponry believed to be in Iraq's possession, including almost four tons of the nerve agent VX; six hundred tons of ingredients for VX; as much as three thousand tons of other poison-gas agents; and at least five hundred and fifty artillery shells filled with mustard gas. Nor did the inspectors find any stores of aflatoxin.

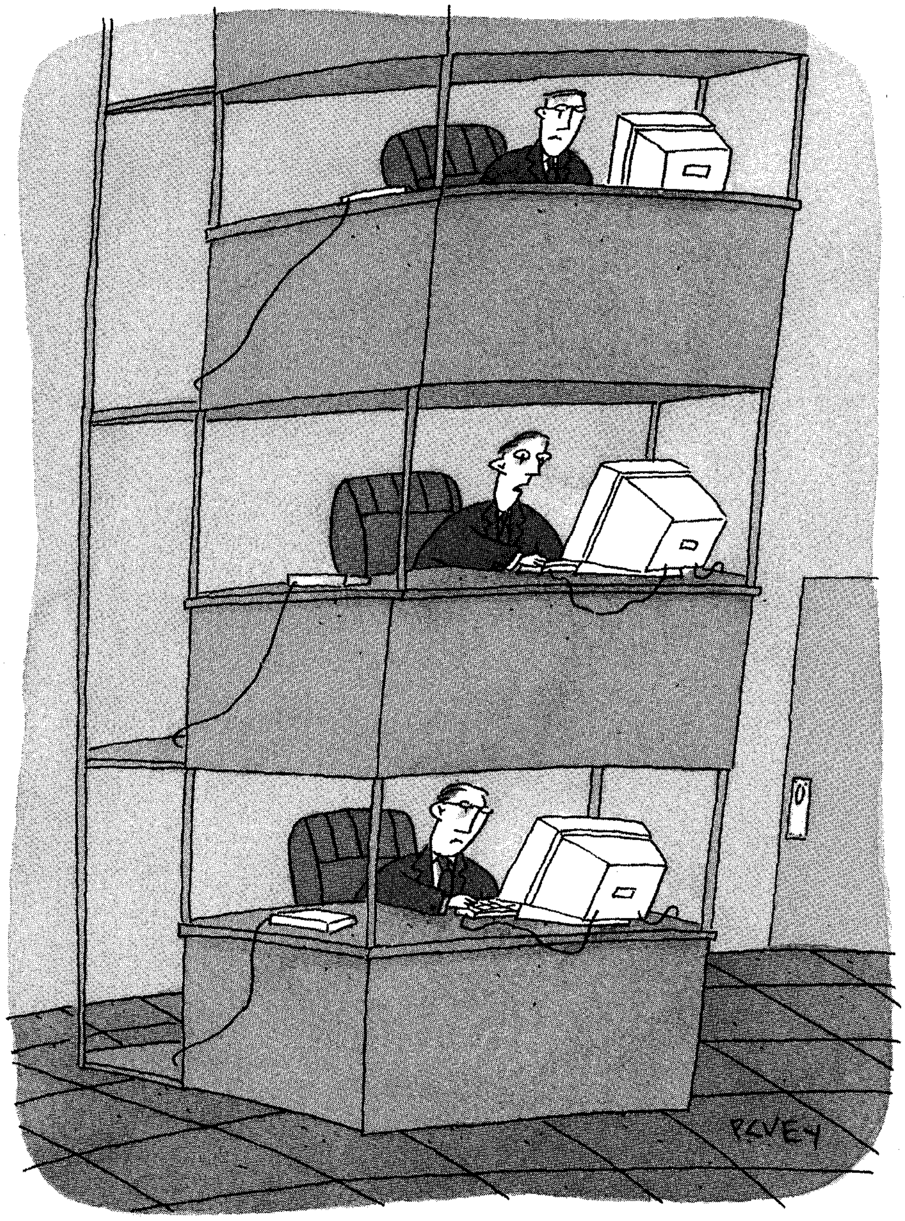
Saddam's motives are unclear, too. For the past decade, the development of these weapons has caused nothing but trouble for him; his international isolation grows not from his past crimes but from his refusal to let weapons inspectors dismantle his nonconventional-weapons programs. When I asked the Iraqi dissident Kanan Makiya why Saddam is so committed to these programs, he said, "I think this regime developed a very specific ideology associated with power, and how to extend that power, and these weapons play a very important psychological and political part." Makiya added, "They are seen as essential to the security and longevity of the regime."

Certainly, the threat of another Halabja has kept Iraq's citizens terrorized and compliant. Amatzia Baram, the Iraq expert at the University of Haifa, told me that in 1999 Iraqi troops in white biohazard suits suddenly surrounded the Shiite holy city of Karbala, in southern Iraq, which has been the scene of frequent uprisings against Saddam. (The Shiites make up about sixty per cent of Iraq's population, and the regime is preoccupied with the threat of another rebellion.) The men in the white suits did nothing; they just stood there. "But the message was clear," Baram said. " 'What we did to the Kurds in Halabja we can do to you.' It's a very effective psychological weapon. From the information I saw, people were really panicky. They ran into their homes and shut their windows. It worked extremely well."

Saddam's weapons of mass destruction clearly are not meant solely for domestic use. Several years ago in Baghdad, Richard Butler, who was then the chairman of UNSCOM, fell into conversation with Tariq Aziz, Saddam's confidant and Iraq's deputy Prime Minister. Butler asked Aziz to explain the rationale for Iraq's biological-weapons project, and he recalled Aziz's answer: "He said, 'We made bioweapons in order to deal with the Persians and the Jews.' "

Iraqi dissidents agree that Iraq's programs to build weapons of mass destruction are focussed on Israel. "Israel is the whole game," Ahmad Chalabi, the leader of the Iraqi National Congress, told me. "Saddam is always saying publicly, 'Who is going to fire the fortieth missile?' "—a reference to the thirty-nine Scud missiles he fired at Israel during the Gulf War. "He thinks he can kill one hundred thousand Israelis in a day with biological weapons." Chalabi added, "This is the only way he can be Saladin"—the Muslim hero who defeated the Crusaders. Students of Iraq and its government generally agree that Saddam would like to project himself as a leader of all the Arabs, and that the one sure way to do that is by confronting Israel.

In the Gulf War, when Saddam attacked Israel, he was hoping to provoke an Israeli response, which would drive America's Arab friends out of the allied coalition. Today, the experts say, Saddam's desire is to expel the Jews from history. In October of 2000, at an Arab summit in Cairo, I heard the vice-chairman of Iraq's Revolutionary Command Council, a man named Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, deliver a speech on Saddam's behalf, say-



"We should have taken the cubicles."

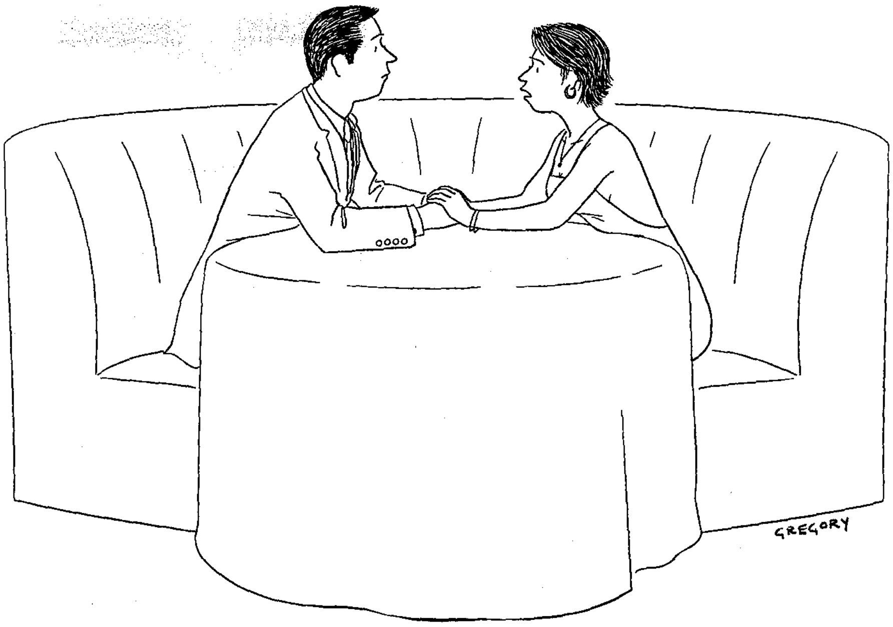
ing, "Jihad alone is capable of liberating Palestine and the rest of the Arab territories occupied by dirty Jews in their distorted Zionist entity."

Amatzia Baram said, "Saddam can absolve himself of all sins in the eyes of the Arab and Muslim worlds by bringing Israel to its knees. He not only wants to be a hero in his own press, which already recognizes him as a Saladin, but wants to make sure that a thousand years from now children in the fourth grade will know that he is the one who destroyed Israel."

It is no comfort to the Kurds that the Jews are now Saddam's main preoccupation. The Kurds I spoke with, even those who agree that Saddam is aiming his remaining Scuds at Israel, believe that he is saving some of his "special weapons"—a popular euphemism inside the Iraqi regime—for a return visit to Halabja. The day I visited the Kalak Bridge, which divides the Kurds from the Iraqi Army's Jerusalem brigade, I asked Muhammad Najar, the local official, why the brigade was not facing west, toward its target. "The road to Jerusalem," he replied, "goes through Kurdistan."

A few weeks ago, after my return from Iraq, I stopped by the Israeli Embassy in Washington to see the Ambassador, David Ivry. In 1981, Ivry, who then led Israel's Air Force, commanded Operation Opera, the strike against the Osirak nuclear reactor near Baghdad. The action was ordered by Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who believed that by hitting the reactor shortly before it went online he could stop Iraq from building an atomic bomb. After the attack, Israel was condemned for what the *Times* called "inexcusable and short-sighted aggression." Today, though, Israel's action is widely regarded as an act of muscular arms control. "In retrospect, the Israeli strike bought us a decade," Gary Milhollin, of the Wisconsin Project, said. "I think if the Israelis had not hit the reactor the Iraqis would have had bombs by 1990"—the year Iraq invaded Kuwait.

Today, a satellite photograph of the Osirak site hangs on a wall in Ivry's office. The inscription reads, "For General David Ivry—With thanks and appreciation for the outstanding job he did on the Iraqi nuclear program in 1981, which made our job much easier in Desert Storm." It is signed "Dick Cheney."



"It would never work out between us, Tom—we're from two totally different tiers of the upper middle class."

• •

"Preëmption is always a positive," Ivry said.

Saddam Hussein never gave up his hope of turning Iraq into a nuclear power. After the Osirak attack, he rebuilt, redoubled his efforts, and dispersed his facilities. Those who have followed Saddam's progress believe that no single strike today would eradicate his nuclear program. I talked about this prospect last fall with August Hanning, the chief of the B.N.D., the German intelligence agency, in Berlin. We met in the new glass-and-steel Chancellery, overlooking the renovated Reichstag.

The Germans have a special interest in Saddam's intentions. German industry is well represented in the ranks of foreign companies that have aided Saddam's nonconventional-weapons programs, and the German government has been publicly regretful. Hanning told me that his agency had taken the lead in exposing the companies that helped Iraq build a poison-gas factory at Samarra. The Germans also feel, for the most obvious reasons, a special responsibility to Israel's security, and this, too, motivates their desire to expose Iraq's weapons-of-mass-destruction programs. Hanning is tall, thin, and almost translucently white. He is sparing with words, but he does not equivocate. "It is our estimate that Iraq will have an atomic bomb in three years," he said.

There is some debate among arms-control experts about exactly when Saddam will have nuclear capabilities. But there is no disagreement that Iraq, if unchecked, will have them soon, and a nuclear-armed Iraq would alter forever the balance of power in the Middle East. "The first thing that occurs to any military planner is force protection," Charles Duelfer told me. "If your assessment of the threat is chemical or biological, you can get individual protective equipment and warning systems. If you think he's going to use a nuclear weapon, where are you going to concentrate your forces?"

There is little doubt what Saddam might do with an atomic bomb or with his stocks of biological and chemical weapons. When I talked about Saddam's past with the medical geneticist Christine Gosden, she said, "Please understand, the Kurds were for practice." ♦

FICTION

BABY WILSON

BY E. L. DOCTOROW

RICK GILES

I had taken up with her, knowing she was this crazy lovesick girl. It was against my better judgment. I was too accustomed to having my life made easy. I was stopped in my tracks by the smitten sweet smile and the pale eyes. With straight brown hair she never fussed with but to wash it. And she wore long cotton dresses and no shoes in the business district. Karen. A whole year ago. And now she had gone and done this thing.

She held it out to me all rolled up in a blanket.

Where'd you get that?

Lester, this is our baby. He is named Jesu because he is a Spanish-looking child. He will be a dark saturnine young man with slim hips like yours.

The face was still red with its effort to be born, and its hair was slick with something like pomade, and it had small dark eyes struggling to see. Around his wrist was a plastic band.

I don't want to hold him, I said. Take him back.

Oh, silly man, she said, smiling, cradling it in her arms. It's not hard to hold a dear child.

No, Karen, I mean take him back to the hospital where you stole him.

I couldn't do that, Lester. I couldn't do that, this is my newborn child, this is my tiny little thing his momma loves so that

I am giving him to you to be your son.

And she smiled at me, that dreamland smile of hers.

She moved her shoulders from side to side and sang to it, but the little arms sort of jerked and waved a bit and she didn't seem to notice. There was a dried blob of blood on the front of its wrappings.

I looked at the clock. It was just noon. Was this a reasonable day, Karen should have been at Nature's Basket doing up her flowers.

I went into the bedroom and put on my jeans and a fresh shirt. I wet my hair and combed it and got a beer from the kitchen.

There were two hospitals in Crenshaw, the private one, in the historic district, and the county one, out by the interstate. What did it matter where she took it from, either one would be just as good. Or I could drive it direct to the police station, not the smartest move in the world. Or I could just take the Durango and leave.

Instead of doing any of these things by which I would finally reform into a person who makes executive decisions, I thought to myself, I would not want to shock such a woman in her dangerous blissful state of mind, and so went back and tried again as if you could argue sense into someone who was never too steady to begin with and was now totally bereft of her remaining faculties.

This is wrong, Karen. It is wrong to go around stealing babies.

But this is my baby, she said staring into its face. I mean our baby, Lester. Yours and mine. I bore it as you conceived it.

I went over to the couch where she had sat down, and I looked again at the wristband. It said "Baby Wilson."

My name is not Wilson and your name is not Wilson, I said.

That is a simple clerical error. Jesu is our love child, Lester. He is the indissoluble bond God has placed upon our union. God commanded this. We can never part now, we are a family.

And she looked at me with her pale eyes all a-dazzle.

Jesu, if it was him, was crying in little yelps, and its head was turning this way and that with its mouth open and its little hands were all a-tremor.

I had known she would finally put me at risk. I tried to pay no attention when she stole things and presented them to me, because they were little things and of no use. A Mexican embroidered nightshirt—whereas I like to sleep in the altogether—or a silver money clip in the shape of an "L" for Lester, like I was some downtown lawyer, or an antique music box, for Christ's sake, that plays "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," as if anyone would want to hear it more than once. Totally the wrong things for me, if it was me she was stealing for, whereas I was hard pressed to get a decent meal in this household.

Karen opened her blouse and put the baby to her breast. It hadn't changed any that I could see—of course, there was no milk there.

I sat down next to her and pointed the remote at the TV: cartoon, a rerun, puppets, a rerun, nature, a preacher, and then I found the local news station.

Just like them, they hadn't heard the news yet.

Karen, I said, I'll be right back, and I drove into town to the Bluebird. It was lunchtime, busy as hell, and Brenda wasn't too pleased, but seeing the look in my eyes she took a cigarette break out the back door. I told her what was what.

She stood listening, Brenda, and shook her head.

Lester, she said, your brains are in your balls. That is the way you are and the way you'll always be.

God damn it, Brenda, it's not something I've done, you understand. Is this what I need to hear from you right now?

She was squinting at me from the smoke drifting up into her eyes.

I said, And you sometimes haven't minded if that's where my brain is, as I recall.

Brenda is as unlike Karen as two women can be. Sturdier in mind, and shaped as if for the Bluebird clientele in her powder-blue uniform with the "Brenda" stitched on the bosom pocket.

Are you aware, she said, that kidnapping is a federal offense? Are you aware that if something happens to that infant the both of you—I'm saying the both of you, don't shake your head no—let's see, how do they do it in this state, I forget, electricity or the needle? I mean all Alice in Wonderland will end up is in the loony bin, but you as aiding and abetting—goodbye, Charlie.

I was beginning to feel sick to my stomach standing there out in the sun with the Bluebird garbage bins in full reek.

She ground out her cigarette and took me by the arm and walked me around to the parking lot.

Now, Lester, the first thing is to go to the K mart and buy you some infant formula—I believe it comes in their own plastic bottles these days. You follow the instructions and feed that baby so it doesn't die, as it surely will if you don't step in here. And while you're at it buy you an armload of diapers, they come with Velcro now, and a nightie or three and a cap for its head—she looked up at the sky—it's supposed to get cooler later on. And whatever else you see there in Infants and Toddlers that might come in useful. You understand me?

I nodded.

And then, when it turns out you haven't killed that child you get it back to its rightful parents as soon as you possibly can, any way you can, and see to it that your darling poetess up there on cloud nine takes the rap that is justly hers to take. Do you hear me?

I nodded.

Brenda opened the door for me and saw me up behind the wheel.

And Lester? If I don't hear on the TV tonight that you've settled this to a happy conclusion, I personally will call the cops. You understand me?

Thanks, Brenda.

She slammed the door. And don't ever try to see me anymore, Lester, you asshole, she said.

I had done everything Brenda advised by way of food and sanitation, and now there was peace in the house. I didn't want to alarm Karen in any way, so I treated her with nothing but coöperation. By the time I'd gotten back from the store, she had just begun to realize that a baby needed taking care of. She was so grateful she hugged me, and I helped her fuss over that child as if it was truly ours. Isn't he the sweetest thing? Karen said. How he seems to know us—oh, that is so dear! Look at that sweet face, he is surely the most beautiful baby I ever have seen!

Now, with everything calmed down and both Karen and Baby Wilson asleep on our bed, it was time to do some thinking. I put on the five-o'clock news to get the lay of the land.

Oh my. The Crenshaw commissioner of police saying the entire C.P.D. had been put on alert and deployed throughout the city to find the infant and apprehend the kidnapper or kidnappers. He'd also notified the F.B.I.

Hey, I said, it is just my slightly crazy girl Karen, you don't have to worry, we're not kidnappers, man.

The female they wanted for questioning was probably in her twenties, white, about five-six, slight of build, with straight brown hair. She had brought a bouquet of flowers and, when approached by a nurse, claimed to be a friend of Mrs. Wilson's.

She was that cool, my Karen?

Behind the commissioner was a worried-looking hospital official and, I supposed, the nurse in question, tearful now for having turned her back for a moment to look for a vase.

Then a doctor stepped to the microphone and said whoever had the baby should remember that there was an open wound at the site of the umbilical cord. It should be kept clean and dressed with an antibacterial agent and a fresh bandage at least once a day.

Well, I knew that. I had seen it for myself. In the medicine chest I'd found the Polysporin I had once bought for a cut on my forehead and applied it only after I washed my hands. I am not stupid. The doctor said the baby should have only sponge baths until the wound healed. I would have figured that out, too.

A reporter asked if a ransom note had been received. That really got me riled. Of course not, you moron, I said. What do you think we are?

No ransom note as yet, the commissioner said, emphasizing the "as yet," which offended me even more.

Then we were back in the studio with the handsome news anchor: he said Mrs. Wilson, the mother, was under sedation. He quoted Mr. Wilson, the father, as saying he didn't understand—that they were not rich people, he was a C.P.A. who worked for his living like everyone else.

I had seen enough. I woke up Karen and hustled her and the baby and all the K mart paraphernalia into the Durango. Why, whatever is the matter, Lester? Karen said. She was still half asleep. Are we going somewhere? She looked frightened for a moment until I put Baby Wilson in her arms. I ran back to the house and grabbed some clothes and things for each of us. Then I ran back again and turned off the lights and locked the door.

I could imagine them any minute coming up the road and through the woods around us at the same time. We were in a cul-de-sac at the end of a dirt road here. I drove down to the two-lane. It was a mile from there to the freeway ramp. I pointed east for Nevada, though not planning to go there, necessarily, but just to be out on the highway away from town, feeling safer on the move, even if expecting any moment to see a cop car in the rearview.

I wasn't worried about Brenda, she would think twice before getting involved. But I reasoned that if the police were smart they would talk to every florist in the city. Of course, their being Crenshaw's finest, it was only even odds they would make the connection to an employee of Nature's Basket who had not shown up for work, one Karen Robileaux, age twenty-six. But even odds was not good enough as far as I was concerned, besides which the F.B.I. were getting on the case, so say the odds were now sixty-forty, and if they made an I.D. of Karen it would be too late for an anonymous return of the baby. And if they came knocking on the door before we had the chance to deliver him back of our own accord, as appeared likely, there would be no alleviating circumstances for a judge to consider, that I could see.

And so we were out of there.

I had picked up her shoulder bag when running out of the house. Of course, it was of Indian design, knitted, with all sorts of jagged lines, sectioned like a map in different colors of sand and rust and aqua. Inside she kept not what women usually keep in their bags, no lipstick or powder compacts, or portable tampon containers, or any such normal things as that. She had some crumbs of dried flowers, and a packet of Kleenex, and her house keys, and a paperback book about the Intergalactic Council, a kind of U.N. of advanced civilizations around the universe, and how it was trying to send messages of peace to Earth. It was a nonfiction book, she had told me all about it. She had been thinking of becoming an Earth Representative of the Council. And two crumpled dollar bills and a handful of change.

Karen, don't you have any money? Didn't you get paid this week?

Oh, I forgot, yes, Lester, let's see, she said and rooted about in the pocket of her dress. And she handed me her pay envelope.

She had her hundred and twenty in there. I was carrying thirty-five in my wallet. Not great. I could cover gas, food, and a motel room for a night.

After a couple of hours on the road, I was calming down. It occurred to me that, despite everything, I was not mad at Karen. Given her state of mind, she couldn't be held responsible. If anyone, I was the one to blame for not springing into action the minute she walked in the door with the kid. And she was so trusting, sitting up there beside me with Baby Wilson in her arms and her eyes on the road ahead. She didn't ask where we were going, not that I could have told her. And the moving car seemed to soothe him, too. He was quiet in her arms. A weird feeling, something like a pride of ownership, came over me, which I would compare now to falling asleep at the wheel. My God, I woke up quickly enough.

By now it had gotten dark, it was all desert now, the road flat and straight. Karen opened her window and leaned out to see the stars. I had to slow down so Baby Wilson would not have a cold wind blowing into his face. I stuck my hand over the back of the seat and rummaged around till I found the package of diapers. I pulled one out and told her to put it around his little head.

Babies don't get sick the first three months of their life, Karen said. No viruses or anything. They are automatically insured by God for three months exactly. Did you know that, Lester?

But she did as I asked.

By midnight, I had us tucked away in a Days Inn outside of Dopple City, Nevada. So, without consciously thinking about it till we were practically there, this was where I had meant to come.

I brought in a hamburger dinner, French fries, chicken wings, a milkshake, and for Karen a garden salad. She never drank anything but water. I left her sitting on one of the double beds and feeding the child. I went outside for a smoke and then got back in the S.U.V.

I knew Dopple. It was a city in its dreams only—what, a railroad yard, a string of car dealerships? It wasn't much of anything. Anyone could find the strip by seeing where the night sky was lit up.

I decided on Fortunato's. The lady dealers, with their little black bow ties and white shirts and black vests and ass-tight slacks, were the one bit of class. Bells ringing, someone singing with a karaoke, the usual din of losers. A cheap mob place trying to be Vegas, with an understocked bar and slots from yesteryear. It smelled, too, like there was a stable or a cow barn out back.

In the men's room, where the floor was all wet and some drunk had lost it, I carefully combed my hair. Then I went out and sat down at a five-dollar table that looked about right and bought fifty dollars in chips. Little blond lady dealer, a pitman just behind her. Four decks in the shoe, but my system is not counting cards. My system is betting modestly while sitting next to a high roller with a big stack in front of him. Kind who talks too much and swivels around with each winning hand to see if he's gathered the audience he deserves.

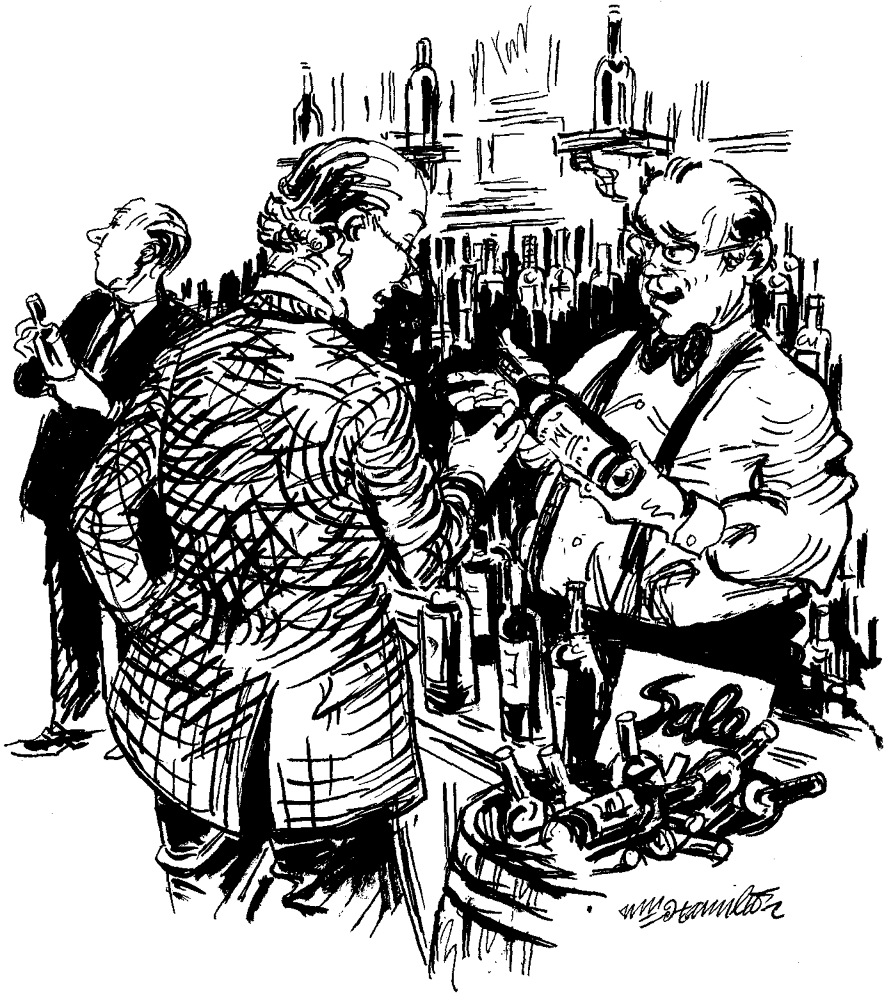
I didn't look at the dealer but smiled as if to myself every now and then. I was very quiet. When I doubled, if the pitman had moved on, I put down a chip for her. She didn't look at me but nodded slightly and smiled as if to herself. Tiny mouth but well shaped. There arose a sympathy between us. It's not as if any cheating goes on—its more like a flirtation through the cards. Things happen. At the end of a half hour, it was as if she'd taken the edge of her plump little hand and cut one of the high roller's stacks and slid it over to me. I got up at that point—it was supposed to be a fun thing, nothing to take too far. That would lack class, ruin the whole game between us. I left twenty for her and cashed in for a hundred and twenty-five dollars net.

It was a short drive to the Mexican part of town. Dark there, quiet, not many lights. I parked into the curb, rolled down the window, and sat there and had a smoke, and pretty soon a kid came along. He couldn't have been more than thirteen, fourteen. Peered in at me for a good look. When I told him what I was buying, he went to the front of my car and looked at the California plate. Then he went around a corner and a few minutes later someone who could have been his mother was standing at my window. She was a heavyset woman with a handsome broad face and a black dress too tight for her, but she acted tired, or fed up. She wanted one-fifty for a six-pack, which was cheap enough, but I told her as honestly as I could I had only one and a quarter to spend. She said something in Spanish indicating her disgust, but then she nodded, and I drove away with two Visas, two MasterCards, and two Amexes, one of them Gold.

What was I up to if not executive decisions? I felt almost proud of myself by the time I got back to the motel. Karen was asleep with her arm around the infant. Her shift had ridden up. She was weird and maybe even a witch of some sort, but those were the smoothest young legs and artfully draped crescents of backside a man could ever hope to gaze upon. But I was tired, too, and decided to wait till morning. I conformed one of my driver's licenses, practiced my signature, and then went to sleep in the other bed, thinking what a great country this was.

Of course, the infernal problem remained, whatever the stupid mood I happened to be in. How was I going to get little junior away from Karen without making her crazier than she was? And if I managed that, how to avoid the law while finding a way to deliver him to his proper parents? And thirdly, how to keep Karen out of a U. S. district court, as well as the newspapers, as an object of public odium, to say nothing of myself?

And then in the morning, wouldn't you know it, she was so busy with the baby that she didn't have time for me. Or inclination. Everything was Jesu this and



"This isn't just any old food wine. This is the foodies' food wine."

Jesu that, all her love flowing out of her and none of it coming in my direction. She sent me off for more supplies, so careless of my feelings she didn't even find it necessary to explain that the baby was taking all her weakened strength, as if she was a real mother recovering from the act of giving birth. She just expected me to understand that from the way she moved about, holding her hand in the small of her back for a moment of thought, or blowing back from the corner of her mouth a strand of hair that had fallen over her eye because both her hands were busy diapering the kid, and so on.

It is strange how different the same woman can be at different times, even a lovesick crazy one like this, who was so moony about me from the first moment I caught her attention when I walked into Nature's Basket to wire flowers to Illinois for my mother's birthday. There was this lovely girl in a long dress and barefooted who seemed to have risen out of the smell of earth and the heavy humidity you get in a florist's. Karen looked at me as if struck dumb. She tucked her hair behind her ears and said it was nice that I had a mother I thought so well of. I didn't tell her otherwise. I went along with her illusion, whereas the twenty-five dollars I laid down for the mixed bouquet was an investment against a return of ten times or twenty times that which I hoped to wheedle out of the old bat after a decent interval.

So after I get back with doughnuts and coffee, and a yogurt for Karen, and this and that from the drugstore, it starts to rain in Dopple City. Lightning and thunder, an unlikely spring torrent, and what does she do but take Baby Wilson outside behind the Days Inn, where she steps over the scraggly attempt at landscaping and walks out into the desert dirt, laughing and hugging the poor child and holding her head up to drink rainwater while not listening to what I am saying, and shaking me off when I try to hustle her back inside. And, as suddenly as it came, the rain passes, and Karen is standing there with her hair wet, as if she'd just had a shower, and she says, Look, my sweet baby, you see what God is doing? And to me she says, You, too, Lester, wait for the runoff, where the rivulets leave their traces. Keep your eyes focussed—it is the pure magic of the desert you are about to see.

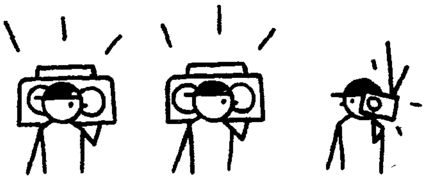
And all she meant was those desert wildflowers that hurry to blossom from the least encouragement of rain, which they did—little settlements of blue and yellow and white spikes and petals and tiny cups in the declivities, clustered close to the land as if not wanting to take the chance of growing up too far away from it, flowers that you don't actually see opening but just have the feeling that they were there all along, only you didn't happen to notice them before.

And that was pretty, if you go for that sort of thing, but the child still couldn't see, although he seemed to be peering out from under her hand, which she held over his head like an umbrella, and for a moment I had the ridiculous feeling of real communication between them, this mad girl and a stolen infant just two or three days old, who were now poking about together under the sun out there in the flowering desert behind the Days Inn.

I left them there and got the keys to the Durango and took it down the highway to a used-car place. I wanted to get out of Dopple City as soon as possible. My theory was to keep moving if nothing else. Besides which, I did not want to have to pay another day's rent on the motel room, the checkout time for which was twelve noon.

The Durango was registered in both our names, although in truth it was Karen's savings that had bought it, but under my influence, I might add, since I had always held Durangos in high esteem.

It was already used when we bought it, though in reasonable condition, with just fifty thousand miles on the odometer, which I had since added twenty to, but the front tires were almost new, which is what I explained to the guy at the car lot, uselessly, since he would only give me seven-fifty for it, six if I wanted cash. I took the six hundred. He was a short, fat, underhanded thief in a white shirt and string tie but then again did not ask too many questions as he unscrewed my plates and handed them to me.



His man gave me a ride a mile down the road to the Southwest Car Rental, and I used my Amex Gold to secure a new Windstar van whose greatest if not only attribute was a Nevada license plate.

It was in this sad, shining new van that I wouldn't ordinarily be caught dead in that I packed up my imitation wife and child and headed west, back to California. I had no idea what to do. But we were well disguised in our domestic vehicle with a little baby boy adorably asleep in the new car chair I had got him. Karen stroked the upholstery. She marvelled at the drink containers at each seat. She accepted the Windstar without question, as she did any mysterious moves on my part. My feeling about things began to change: I had cash in my pocket and now some pride in my heart because Karen loved the new car. She turned the radio on, and there we were, heading west with the sun behind us and the great Patsy Cline singing "Sweet Dreams of You," Karen giving me a sly amused and weirdly sane glance that caused me nearly to swerve into the opposite lane as we sang along with Patsy, *I know I should hate you the whole night through, instead of having sweet dreams of you.*

Now I do admit that there came over me an idea I not only hadn't considered but that wouldn't have come even glancingly to my mind before this moment, which was to let it all hang out—to embrace my mad girl's madness as, before all this happened, I had customarily embraced her. Why not? Baby Wilson already had a certain character that I found agreeable. He cried only when he had to, and seemed thoughtful most of the time, if that was possible, full of serious attention to the new world in which he found himself, as if, seeing it only as a blur, he was by way of compensation listening very carefully. And though Karen told me that what I thought was a smile as he looked at me was in reality a bit of indigestion, it was hard for me not to smile back. She was an instant mother, who seemed to have the wise love that mothers have as soon as they become mothers, as if the maternal hormones or whatever chemicals are involved had begun to operate within her from the moment she calmly walked out of that hospital with some other woman's newborn in her arms.

I didn't know anything about the Wilsons except that Mr. Wilson was an accountant, which didn't foretell a particularly exciting life for this kid, who had already seen, and not yet a week old, two states and a rare rain in the desert that not many people not living in the desert would ever see. And his beautiful though self-appointed and by law criminally insane mother had picked one tiny blue flower and put its stem in his little hand, and his fingers had curled around it, automatically, of course, but he still clutched it, though fast asleep in his car chair as we crossed the state line into California.

And from all of this and the sun lighting our way ahead like a golden road I had this revelation of a new life for myself, a life I had never thought of aspiring to, where I would be someone's husband and someone else's father, dependable, holding a full-time job and building a respectable place in the world for himself and his family. So that when he died they would mourn grievously and bless his departing spirit for the love and meaningful life he had given them.

A special news bulletin on the radio was like cold water on my face: Baby Wilson's parents had received a ransom note.

We were about a hundred miles east of Crenshaw. I pulled over to the side of the road.

The details of the note had not been divulged, but it was believed the Wilsons intended to meet the kidnapper's demands.

God damn!

What, Lester?

Can you believe this?

I pounded the steering wheel. The baby woke and began to cry. Karen reached back and unbuckled him and lifted him over the seat and held him in her arms as if to protect him from me.

Lester, you're frightening us!

Can you believe the evil in this world? That some slime would con those poor people to cash in on their suffering?

She was silent for a moment. She said, I do believe there is evil in this world, yes, but I believe people can be redeemed? Her voice clouded up, she could barely finish the sentence. She began rocking the kid in her arms and soon the tears were coming, and now I had the two of them bawling away.

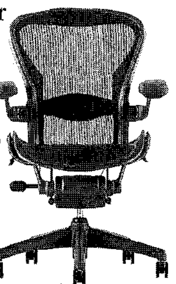
I got out of the van and lit a cigarette and paced up and down the grass shoulder. A car sped by, and its wind made the van shudder. Then another. I wanted to be in one of those cars. There was some sort of green crop growing in bunches low to the ground behind the fence and it seemed to go on for miles. I wanted to be the farmer out here in the middle of nowhere quietly growing his cash crop of whatever it was, spinach or cauliflower or some other damn inedible vegetable. I wanted to be anyone but who I was and anywhere but where I was. What was I supposed to do now?

I motioned for her to roll down her window: Has it occurred to you, Karen, that you have provided him or them the opportunity?

Gone were all my diplomatic strategies, all the anger that I had pent up cascaded over this sad pathetic girl sitting rocking the baby in her arms and her pale eyes reddened and enlarged with the tears rolling down her cheeks.

Yes, you have stirred up something really grand, you know that? You have inspired others to do evil, Karen Robileaux. And not only this slime or slimes. Supposing he really had possession of the baby? Is it in the baby's interest of safety to have the news broadcast all around the country that there is a ransom note? Of course not. How could this slimeball trust them now, these poor parents, thinking they had told everyone about his private communication. What would you do under the circumstances if you couldn't trust the parents to deal without calling in the cops, the F.B.I., and the media—I mean, this is a goddam radio station in Los Angeles. Los Angeles! They don't give a shit if the baby turns up dead. They just want people to listen so they can sell their advertising. They are happy to violate such delicate confidences. They are proud to be good reporters! So the evil is going out in all directions, Karen, like radio waves from an antenna.

He can't do anything bad to this baby, she sobbed. None of them can. He doesn't have this baby. I have this baby, she said, kissing the child fer-



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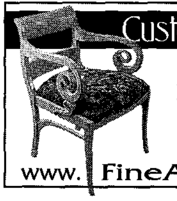

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vently on the cheeks, on his head, every part of him that was not swaddled.

Well, maybe not, I said, quieter now. But how do the Wilsons know that? He has already done something to them when they find out he is a fraud and a hoax and they are who knows how many thousands of dollars poorer. And not only that, I said more to myself than to her, everyone thinks now you have an accomplice, a male accomplice, because no woman alone who stole a child would do it for purposes of ransom.

Karen opened the door and stepped out of the van and handed me Baby Wilson, and then went off a ways on the shoulder behind a tree and lifted her dress and squatted down to pee.

I had not held him before to any extent. He was a warm little fellow, I could feel his heart beat, and he squirmed around a bit trying to look at me who was holding him. And he had stopped crying.

When Karen came back, she took Baby Wilson and got back in the van and sat there frowning and staring straight ahead, and she wasn't crying anymore, either. It was like she was waiting for the car to move, as if it really didn't need a driver to get up there beside her and put the key in the ignition.

A few miles on, at the edge of a town, I pulled into a gas station with a convenience store. I bought us bottled waters and presented one to Karen by way of a peace offering. Without looking at me, she took it. I bought the newspapers they carried, the local and the L.A. and San Diego papers. They all had the story, they were blissed out with excitement. And every story came with a composite police drawing of someone who looked like Karen, though with her ears grown bigger and her mouth thinner and her eyes transplanted from someone else. It was both not a good likeness and too close for comfort.

I tossed the papers away. I didn't feel the need to show her anything more by way of persuasion. She had no voice in the matter, as far as I was concerned. We drove on, and this turned out to be a well-groomed little town with big trees shading the streets and the retail stores uniformly in good taste so as not to offend the eye. And there was nobody in sight, as if the townsfolk were having their afternoon nap, even the police. It hit me then, my idea: if the story was in every paper, if it was all over the damn state, did it matter where we dropped off Baby Wilson? And I thought, Why not here? And if not now, when?

I peered right and left as I rolled to a stop at each corner until I saw something along the lines of what I wanted—a neat white stucco church with a red barrel-tile roof. It was a Catholic church, as uniformly tasteful as everything else in this town. It had a Christ on the Cross in relief on the stucco steeple. I can't now remember the saintly name of it, even the town's name escapes me, this was a moment of such stressful fatedness that the surroundings remain in my mind only as bodily impressions. I remember the sun on my neck as I carried the car seat by its handles as a portable carryall for the baby after Karen had been in there a few minutes, I remember my instructions to her beforehand as we sat in the van with the motor running in the neatly ruled empty parking lot around the side, and, though the air-conditioning was on, I felt the sweat dripping down the small of my back.

It was very peculiar that she seemed as ready as I was, as if somewhere at some moment—I couldn't have told you when—we had made magnetic contact. As if it had never been otherwise than that we were both sane and synchronized in our thoughts. So I experienced something also like a feeling of estrangement as I realized, looking at her, that I loved Karen Robileaux. I loved her. I mean it just came over me—an incredible welcoming rush of gladness that welled up in my throat and threatened to spill out of my eyes. I loved her. Her frail being was strong. Her kookiness was mystical. And it was even eerier to hear in my mind, at last, what she had been telling me time and time again before this all happened—how she adored me, how she actually did love me in all the ways that people understand as love. It was a bonding that was true, if it was this scary. Of course, I said nothing and did not declare myself. I really didn't have to. She knew. Our intimacy was in the fact of our conspiring together as she concentrated on what I was saying with her pale wolf eyes staring into mine, so much so that, once she got out of the car and walked up the steps into the church, I wondered if this hadn't really been her plan, and that she had brought me to this moment as I believed I had brought her. Because I remember her only problem was technical, whereas you might have expected much more in the way of resistance.

Lester, she said, I don't know the right words for confessing.

It's O.K., I said, just go in there and sit down in that box they have. It is somewhere off to the side. You don't have to be Catholic for them to listen to you. When he hears you, the priest will sit down on the other side, and you just tell him you want to confess something.

BEAUTY

There she was on "Entertainment Tonight."
Someone had caught a glimpse of Bardot
after all these years. Brigitte Bardot
running through the trees, across a meadow,
a dog running with her. The hair still long.
Then another part, showing her on the patio,
aged. (Sun-damaged, we say.) The violation
of beauty never happens just once.
When my father heard that his beloved dog
had chased and killed the rancher's sheep,
he went right out and shot it. Because,
he said, once they ran with the pack
and tasted blood it would never stop.

—*Linda Gregg*

And he will listen and never betray your trust that it is just between the two of you. And you don't have to cross yourself or anything, he will tell you what to do if you put it in the form of asking for his advice. And you will thank him, and you will mean it, and maybe thank God, too, that there are people who are sworn to do this for a living.

And what will he say?

Well, I have to believe priests read the papers and watch the TV like everyone else, so he will know what baby you are talking about. He will say, And where is the Wilson baby now? And you will tell him, Father, the baby is here. You will find him in his carryall just inside the front door. And a paper sack with his formula and his diapers and a tube of Polysporin for his belly button.

And when he gets up and runs down the aisle, you slip out the side door to right here where we are parked.

Karen is a brave woman. She has always been brave and never more than at this moment. She walked in there with her skirt swaying from her lovely hips, and her hair, which she had tied up in a ponytail, given the solemnity of the occasion, also swinging from side to side, and for the same reason her usually bare feet were in a pair of sandals.

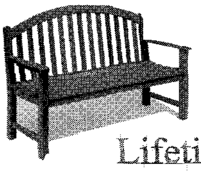
But before she took her deep breath and stepped down from the Windstar, she held the baby in her arms and caressed his round little head and brushed his dark hairs with the tips of her fingers as he stared up at her in his impassive manner and then looked away. And then Karen slipped him gently into my arms like a friend of the mother's who has been given the privilege for just that moment of holding another woman's child.

That whole day, as we drove, she slept in the back seat, curled up with her hands under her chin. I had decided to head north, staying off the freeways for the most part. When it was evening, I pulled into a motel, and she went right from the car to the bed, where she got under the covers and went immediately back to sleep. I didn't want to take any chance that she would wake up and watch the TV, so I pulled the plug and bent it out of shape before I went to the restaurant they had there and watched as on the bar TV Mr. and Mrs. Wilson were shown hugging their baby and laughing through their tears. They were not the youngest of couples. They were both on the portly side, and in fact Mr. Wilson had quite a paunch on him, to make me think I would never let myself go that way. And it turned out they had six other children of various sizes standing around the couch looking at the camera with what I recognized as the same unsmiling quietness of expression as Baby Wilson himself.

Meanwhile, an announcer was telling the story of the return, and quoting Mr. Wilson saying he and his wife were so happy that they forgave whoever had kidnapped their child, but before I could breathe a sigh of relief, the camera cut to the F.B.I. official now in charge of the investigation, and he said that the F.B.I. would continue the search—that, regardless of the outcome, a federal crime had been committed and it was never up to the Wilsons to decide whether or not to prosecute. And then another shot of the bad drawing of Karen.

In the gift shop there I bought a pair of sunglasses and an Angels baseball cap, and we got up at dawn and drove away. Karen wore the glasses and that cap with her hair tucked up inside all the way through California. I used the credit cards sparingly, each one never more than once until the last one, which I hazarded a couple of times and then threw away, not wanting to press my luck, and now we were down to our diminishing cash funds.

In San Francisco, I parked Karen in a movie theatre and went around to Noe Street to see if Fran still lived there. She did. When she opened her door, she said, Well, will you look what the cat dragged in! Fran was never the sort to bear a grudge. She was a song stylist who made her living singing in clubs. She had a housemate now, a kind of blowsy older woman who nevertheless had the tact to excuse herself on some errand or other, probably to her chosen bar. I visited with Fran almost the whole two hours of a feature movie, and then she walked with me to the A.T.M. at the local grocery. As I left, I swore I would return her generosity in full. I knew she didn't believe me, because she gave a good-hearted laugh and said time



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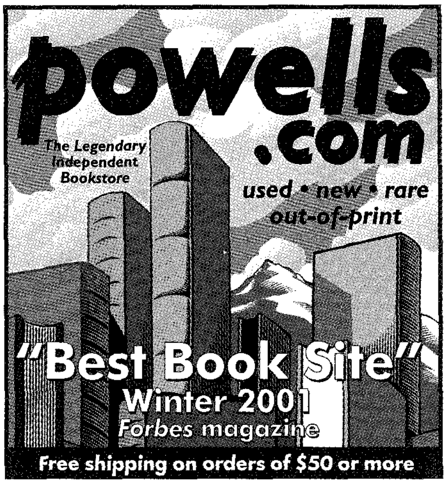
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would tell and she was smiling and shaking her head as I waved and turned the corner.

Just before the Oregon state line, I removed the Nevada plates from the Windstar and replaced them with the Durango's old California plates.

In Seattle, we took the ferry to Canada, standing at the rail in the gray and green mist of that day, with the foghorns coming over the water and the smell of the sea and gulls appearing and disappearing in the bad visibility. Karen loved this part of the trip. There was a new peace between us, and she held my arm with both her hands with a kind of fervent wifeliness.

At the hotel in Vancouver, we resumed our lovemaking as in our first days together and it was action packed, she had really come awake to life as I realized now, reflecting on the last months between us, when she was more withdrawn than I wanted to admit.

Vancouver is a squeaky clean town, like all of Canada that I have ever seen—the glass office buildings reflecting the sky color, the waterside filled with flag-flying yachts and motorboats that are so well kept they look like they've never been used except for advertising, and the downtown without litter of any kind, and everyone going about their business so as not to disturb anyone else. Not a town you want to stay in very long. But you find things if you look, and I found a man in the import-export business who would take the Windstar off my hands, and if he gave me three thousand American for it I knew he would clear at least ten at the other end.

Then I bought Karen an opal engagement ring and a gold wedding band for one thousand Canadian, though we didn't actually get legally married till we were settled in this town in Alaska where she is known not as Karen Robileaux but as Mrs. Lester Romanowski, although she doesn't get around enough to be known very well in her condition but stays in this hillside cabin we rent and tends her garden and cooks good things, not only for me but for herself, since she is eating for two, while I am working down below, at sea level, between the mountains and the waterside, which is where the town is crammed.

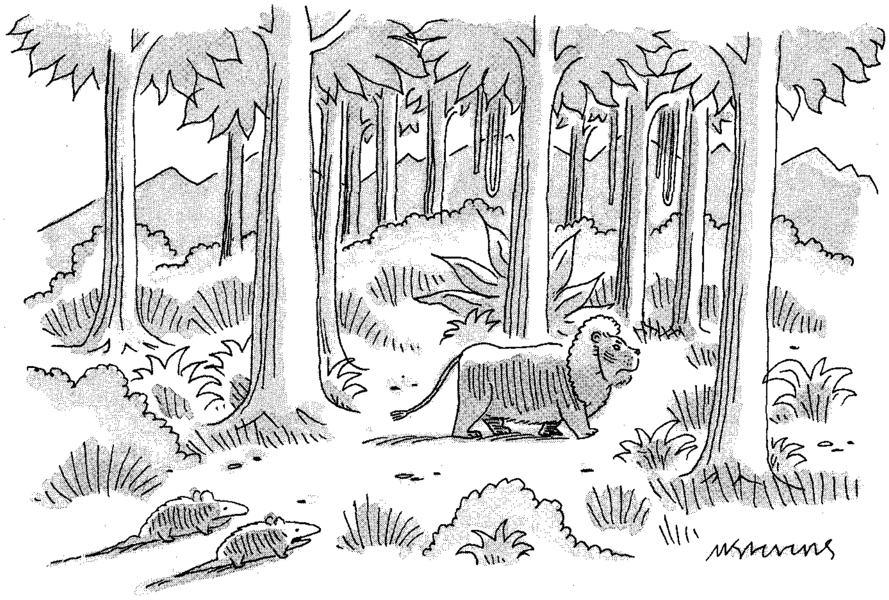
I have different jobs, one scrubbing pots and pans in this phony frontier restaurant, where the monster hamburger menu is up on blackboards, and the bartender has a red beard and wears a lumberjack shirt with the sleeves rolled, and there is sawdust on the floor. I also drive a school bus in the early morning and midafternoon, and another job, when I have to, is the slime line, which is how they handle the fish off the boats—a heavy hauling, slippery job requiring rubber apron and gloves and hip boots and a shower and a good deodorant at the end of the shift.

Just now I have a new opportunity, on the weekend, and it is easy enough. I put on a funny bear costume and meet the cruise-ship passengers as they come down the gangway. I do it because, A, nobody knows it's me in that stupid outfit, and, B, it gives me a chance to get close to those ships without drawing attention to myself. I dance the ladies around a bit and make them laugh and pose with them for a photo to record their historic visit to Alaska.

On my day off, Karen and I have found a place to watch the bears fishing in the shallows for their salmon dinner. Lots of birds busy in the forest, and animals I don't get up out of bed to identify rustle around the cabin at night. Up through the tops of the trees every morning we see the black bald eagle that lives up on the side of the mountain and likes to soar about in the thermals.

Most people living here like us don't quite fit into the greater U.S. for one reason or another, so nobody asks too many questions. Everyone I've met mostly has an attitude of big plans for themselves, which I certainly can appreciate. I'm beginning to think my big plan must have something to do with those cruise ships. They sail up every day to rest their block-long hulls against the dockside. When the tourists pour down the gangways, well, this, plus the fish, is what keeps the Panhandle in the money. But more of the money stays aboard at the gaming tables. So I'm thinking I find a way to get a passenger I.D., take an overnight cruise to the next landing, come back flush the next day—I don't know—the modus is there, and it is only a matter of time till it makes itself known to me.

Karen hugs me when I come home and always has a good dinner waiting, and sits across the table with her chin in her hand and stares at me as I eat. Of course, she praises the reformed man I have become, and as a person who has not been without bold ideas of her own she can appreciate that I am alert and ready for inspiration. But basically she has no mind for anything but the baby growing inside her. She has a wise, contented smile these days, my young wife. No one meeting her for the first time would think she was anything but sane. She said last night that she hopes I don't mind not being consulted but she got used to the name Jesu, and so that is what he will be called. ♦



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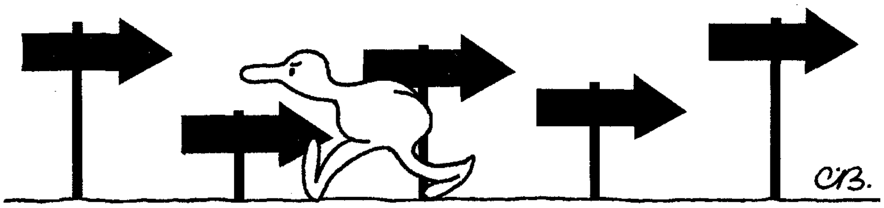


A CRITIC AT LARGE

ENDLESS LOVE

The return of E.T.

BY ANTHONY LANE

The nominations for Best Picture in the Academy Awards for 1982 were as follows: "Gandhi," "Tootsie," "Missing," "The Verdict," and "E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial." The award went to Richard Attenborough's "Gandhi," a film that, like "A Bridge Too Far" and other large-scale Attenborough projects, appeared to last twice as long as the historical events it described. The irony is that if the Academy really wanted a lesson in love, or a plea for cross-cultural harmony—the stuff of Oscar triumph, and everything for which "Gandhi" had so earnestly striven—then it was right there, under the noses of the voters. They were right to want the uplift, the kick of a bursting heart; they just picked the wrong movie. "E.T." and "Gandhi" both feature fine central performances by shrunken, wise-faced vessels of benevolence, but where Attenborough chose to tell his story in a churning, three-volume novel, Spielberg wrote a poem. And all the best movies are poems.

Now, twenty years later, the poem is back, its lyricism not just intact but given extra burnish. The jet of flame beneath the alien ship is no longer a purplish spurt; it is now a ball of fire that burns a peculiar pink, as if E.T. and his fellow-travellers stoked their engines with bubble gum, and had stopped by on Earth to pick up supplies. Welcome, in other words, to the director's cut.

So, what's new? Not the plot, which retains the thrust and simplicity of a parable; this is still the story of ten-year-old Elliott, played by Henry Thomas, who meets E.T.—played, as I always like to think, by E.T. The alien is left behind on Earth by his companions and befriended by Elliott, who, together with his mother, his brother, and his sister, has himself been abandoned by the man of the house. The gap in the family's existence where a father used to be is an open wound, and one effect of E.T.—his unwitting mission—is to heal it, before he heads back to the stars. This sounds unmanageably mawkish, but "E.T." struck its first audiences with a directness and propulsion that nobody had ever associated with a sob story; we knew we were being manipulated, but we didn't care, because the treatment worked. Go ahead, we said to Spielberg: it's our pleasure.

No wonder, two decades on, he has tinkered so little with his tale; unlike other directors' cuts, this one is hardly a vanity project. Spielberg's most searching films are to an extent self-searches, as if he wished to probe his freakishly unlimited capacity for wonder, but, for a master of a public medium, he is not much of a showoff. The new cut unearths no forgotten story lines, no winsome cameos for the director and his friends; he even restrains himself from disinterring a scene between Elliott and his school principal. Although this reputedly shows little more than the back of the principal's head, that head belongs to Harrison Ford—already a Spielberg stalwart from "Raiders of the Lost Ark," and the husband-to-be of Melissa Mathison, who wrote the screenplay for "E.T." But the director was right to keep the scene at bay, because it would have done nothing for the beat of the tale; the audience would merely have thought, Hey, are those Indiana Jones's ears?, and the momentum would have stalled.

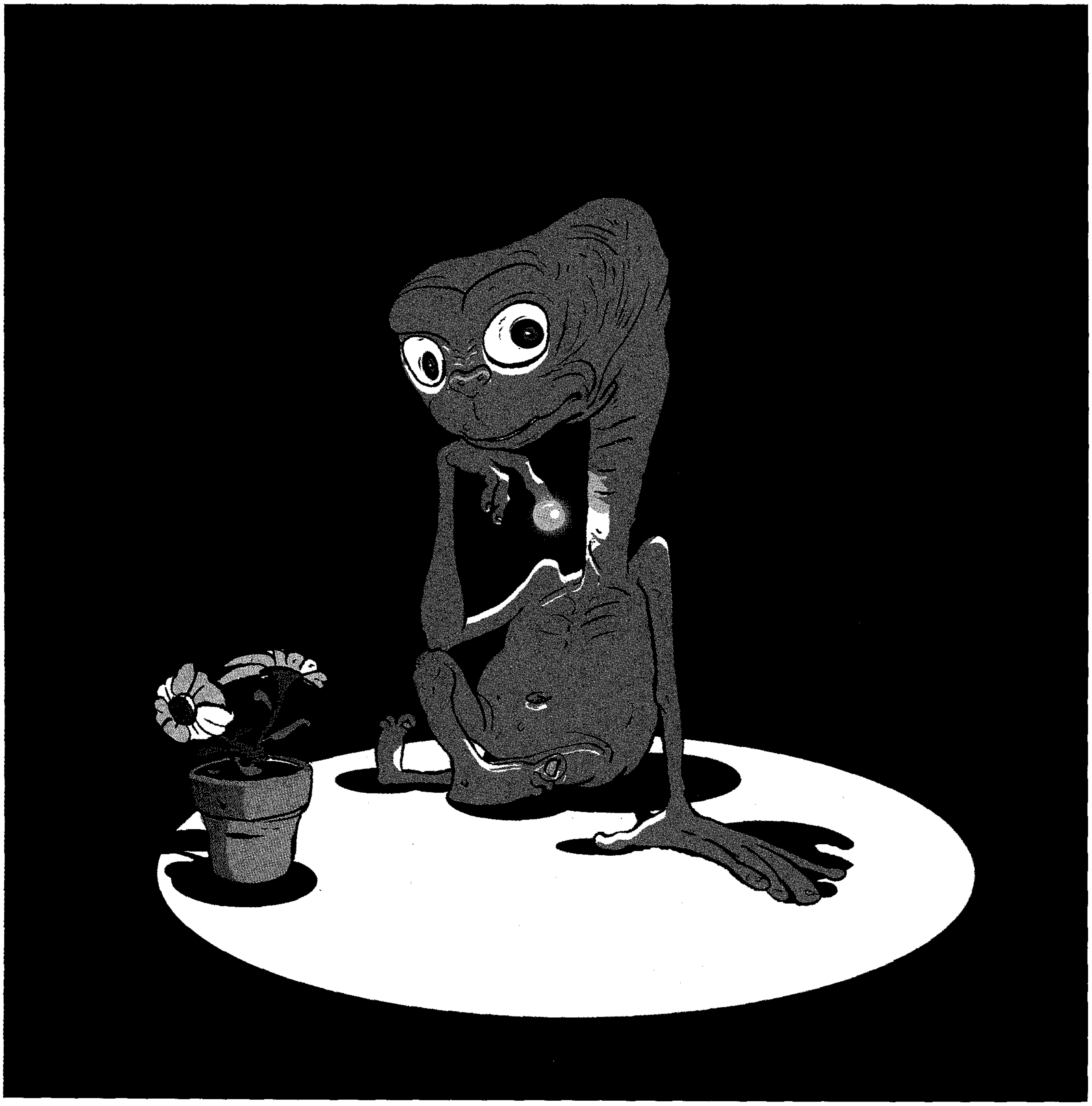
The other reason to keep Ford out is that early and mid-period Spielberg is staunchly undazzled by the wattage of major stars. There was an ordinariness about Roy Scheider in "Jaws" which made it all the more stirring to see the heroism dragged out of him, and from then on Spielberg specialized, with a mildness learned as much from French directors as from his American peers, in drawing memorable performances from actors whom we didn't have to remember from anywhere else. "I'm glad he met you first," Keys, the alien-seeker (Peter Coyote), tells Elliott as they muse on the ailing E.T. It is my favorite line in the film, not only because it registers the final humbling of adult enterprise but also because Keys sounds like a casting director—glad that Spielberg had met Henry Thomas, just the kind of normal boy you would choose to represent the planet. Nowadays, the director thinks nothing of turning to Tom Cruise, as he has done for his next movie, "Minority Report," but Spielberg was somehow at his most relaxed, even his most democratic, in the undemanding company of youngsters, or amid his distinguished line of mothers—blond, capable, and easily hurt. Any hint of hamminess or swagger in "E.T." would throw the tone; indeed, after twenty years, it was good to be reminded that the finest work comes from Robert MacNaughton, the shyest and least showy of the players. He takes the role of Michael, Elliott's older brother, and he holds the broken homestead together, as well as treating E.T. with a courtesy that most teen-agers would hurry to conceal; we may note that, when Spielberg's own parents divorced, he himself was a teen-ager, with three younger sisters to sustain.

A few short scenes are restored for the director's cut, but, to be honest, they aren't much to phone home about. We get a few more fizzes of Halloween, including a moment in which Elliott's mother (Dee Wallace Stone) goes looking for her lost boy, who has been up in the woods with E.T.; I guess it helps the structure of the storytelling, which is a little too quick and scatty as the movie builds up steam, but, on the other hand, none of us have

ISTVAN BANYAI

ever minded the leaps and ellipses of this picture—the startling transition, for instance, from a nice afternoon to a roaring sunset—and it's too late to start worrying now. All that matters is that Elliott stays out through the night, and that his mother goes nuts with concern, as any mother would; her expression as she swings shut the door of the fridge and sees her son standing there, wretched and putty gray, is exquisitely judged—a rushing embrace, then a spasm of anger for his having put her through the wringer, then a relieved collapse into love.

Fans will be divided, I suspect, on the question of the added bathtub scene. Elliott, who is supposed to be sick, is seen on the phone to his mother, while, in the background, a bath is running. E.T. inspects it and, losing his webbed footing, falls in. Elliott has to feign a fit of vomiting to get off the line; he rushes to the tub, desperate to save his friend from drowning, but it turns out that E.T. is happy to stay below the surface of the water and blow bubbles. From this we learn that E.T. is in some respects amphibian; the film's reputation as a fairy tale may be enhanced by this fact—there is more than a touch of the Frog Prince about E.T., with his kindly dispensing of practical wisdom, yet if you kissed him he would not mutate into George Clooney but would carry on being a frog. At the same time, I dislike the sequence, because it disturbs the ideal poise that Spielberg established the first time out—the balance between E.T. the figure of fun and E.T. the savior of mankind. For every shot of him as a joy-bringer—and there is something Christlike in the sight of him stretching wide his hands, near the end, to confer blessings upon Elliott's friends—there is an answering image, designed to trim his dignity to the



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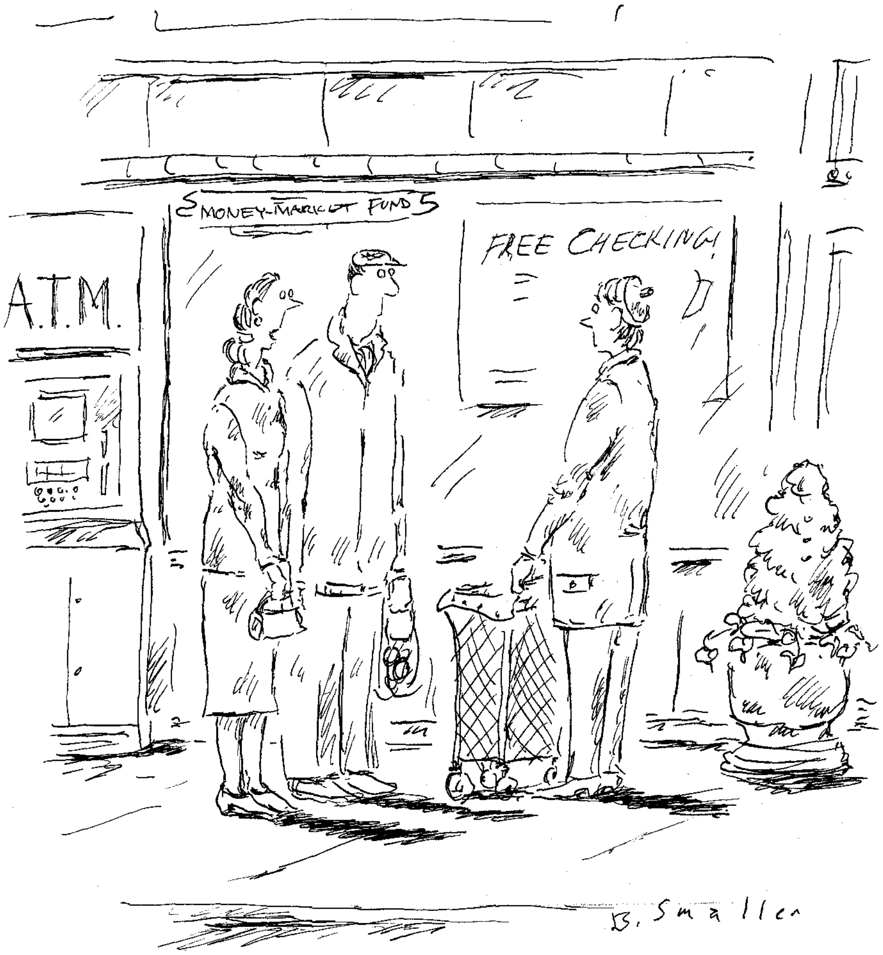


"Larry had his identity stolen, but they sent it right back."

• •

human. Why else would Gertie (Drew Barrymore), Elliott's little sister, dress E.T. up in a wig and jewels? The big screen has never witnessed anything at once so goofy and so solemn as E.T., not even when Peter Lorre was alive, and the mixture is perfect for Spielberg, who is himself a child in an adult's body, with an adult's wealth, doing an adult's job that is all too beautifully geared to turning us back into children. The bathtub is a splash of slapstick, and it distracts us from the paradox of the picture, the tug of feelings which has alternately plagued and inspired its director: what the world needs is a god, and what it wants is a toy.

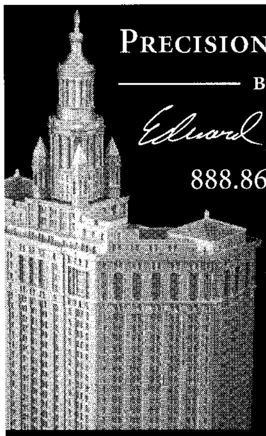
Spielberg, in short, is a suburban transcendentalist, the most successful Emersonian that America has yet spawned; the movie business could not have dreamed up a leader more naturally attuned to the instincts of its customers. That is why he is rereleasing "E.T." now, because there is money in the memory of rapture. He has made just enough alterations to draw in anyone who is tempted by the promise of novelty but not enough to offend the diehards. As for E.T. himself, well, he doesn't look a day under ten million. The director's cut has spared him the surgeon's knife: no face-lift, no tummy tuck, no suction of his intergalactic lipo. Back in the eighties, with his dropsical gut and his bad day with a beer in front of the TV, he was a living rebuke to Jane Fonda and her remorseless workouts, and nothing much has changed. Twenty years: it seems like no time, hardly a blink of E.T.'s slow and sleepy eyes. (The designer, Carlo Rambaldi, based them on those of his cat.) I am staggered to realize that I was already grown up, in body if not in mind, when "E.T." was released, and Spielberg must be banking on the fact that the students who bought tickets in 1982 will now be combing over their bald spots and hustling their own children into line, pressing the experience upon a new generation with words of fretful encouragement—as if the film were not just good but good for you, packed with emotional vitamins.

And what will the kids, with their finicky tastes, make of the movie? As connoisseurs of special effects, they may be alarmed to find a film that takes care to make you forget that its central figure *is* a special effect. Whenever possible, E.T. shares the frame with his young friends; we don't get many shots of him alone, for that would lay stress on his otherness. This is a sweetened rehash of a similar trick in "Jaws," where the shark, viewed singly, seemed a bit of a joke, particularly as it flopped around on deck, but where the shark plus Chief Brody—lunging out of the water as he ladled bloody bait—equalled a mysterious and mortifying togetherness, as if man and beast had been waiting for each other all along. (The same shiver of anticipation hung over Ridley Scott's 1979 "Alien," whose monsters stirred into life at the approach of Sigourney Weaver; to a degree that didn't bear thinking about, they were missing their mom.) Spielberg took these sophisticated entanglements and winnowed away the threat, and he was left with a case of unfathomable need; when Elliott grips the swing in the back yard and stares up into the night, after his first sighting of the intruder, there is—all credit to Henry Thomas here—an extraordinary air not of disquiet, still less of terror, but of semi-restfulness, as if something in his soul had come home.

Not everyone buys this, of course. I remember pointing out to a friend, in 1982, that the spaceship in which E.T. lands resembled a prize-winning onion; it was inoffensively bulbous, it tapered to a point at the top, and you knew that sooner or later you would start to cry. My friend, a keen student of the paranoid, went away and came back with a cloud on his brow; I was nearly right, he explained, but the onion was in fact an onion *dome*—a roof of Red Square, transplanted to an unsuspecting America and bearing a squad of deliberately enchanting agents, the best the Kremlin could produce. "But E.T. brings love, and everybody adores him," I said. "*Exactly*," came the reply. "He gets under their radar. Conventional weaponry doesn't work, so why not beat the sentimental Yankee imperialists at their own game? Soften them up with love."

This unusual theory only holds water, I think, if you can prove that, shortly after the final departure of the spaceship, Elliott turns green and explodes, strewing the surrounding valleys with radioactive spores. The fact is that Spielberg invites any number of dark interpretations and then calmly, one by one, bats them away. The wood where the ship lands, for instance, with its fairground ring of lights: that is no Schwarzwald, no briar-choked nightmare of stunted paths and baffled sunlight, ready to beckon Hansel and Gretel into its Euro-shadows and swallow them whole. It is an American glade, complete with a Thumper and a Bambi, whose doe eyes give the newcomer no more than a passing glance. In a lovely visual rhyme, its ferny floor makes an ideal second home for E.T.; the interior of his ship is a hothouse mulch, a steaming organic rebuff to the spotless, high-tech nave of the mother ship into which Richard Dreyfuss awefully walks at the end of "Close Encounters of the Third Kind: The Special Edition." The early nineteen-eighties was the period in which political parties began to take note of environmental groups, and to ask if it might be worth sucking their earthy concerns into the mainstream; you could call that cynicism, designed to neutralize a challenge, but the uncynical Spielberg was, as ever, ahead of the game, wafting a little eco-friendliness into the heart of popular entertainment. When Peter Sellers played Chauncey Gardiner, in "Being There" (1979), his horticultural pronouncements were taken as haiku of wise governance, and we were urged to mock the mob that fell for them; but E.T. really is a gardener, and his ferrying of Gertie's flowerpot into the ship, at the climax, is a definitive index of good faith. He is a green thought, and we are left in his green shade.

In the hands of another director, so transforming a presence could have been weighted with menace, yet E.T. is inviolably benign. He heralds not the invasion of the body snatchers but the welcome incursion of the spirit lifters; John Carpenter, whose film "The Thing" had the misfortune to come out in the same month as "E.T.," saw his pessimistic vision, replete with toothed stomachs and



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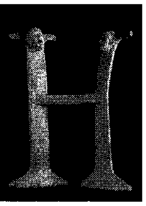

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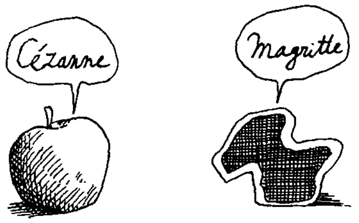
extruding tongues, cast into utter darkness by one touch of E.T.'s luminous finger. E.T. himself is more frightened than frightening; when Elliott finds him in the cornfield and shines a flashlight in his face, he completely bugs out—I have never actually seen a screaming heebie-jeebie, but this is surely the nearest we are likely to get—whereas the boy just shrieks and scoots away. On their next meeting, Elliott lies in a lawn chair, gasping "Mom" from the dry gulch of his mouth, as the creature waddles close. Everything in the movie turns on what E.T. will do, and, as he drops a handful of Reese's Pieces into Elliott's lap—repaying a loan, you might say, since Elliott had earlier laid a trail of them in the forest—we realize not only that the visitor from beyond is a wellspring of kindness but that, with such honest displays of prudence, he could remain in the United States and open a high-interest savings account.

From here on, Elliott is not scared. To be precise, he is scared that the spell will be broken, that E.T. will succumb to homesickness, or earthsickness, or to the darts and shackles of authority; but the "man from the moon" himself, as Gertie calls him, can hold no further terrors. "The fairy story begins where the child is at this time in his life and where, without the help of the story, he would remain stuck: feeling neglected, rejected, degraded. . . . Only on repeated hearing of a fairy tale, and when given ample time and opportunity to linger over it, is a child able to profit fully from what the story has to offer him." That is Bruno Bettelheim—concentration-camp survivor and scholar of childhood, all the Spielberg obsessions distilled into one man—in "The Uses of Enchantment." This study suggests that "E.T." is not quite the seamless fairy tale that some people take it for, with Elliott cast as a timeless hero. He is a modern kid from an unmagical town who gets hit by a fairy tale, as if by lightning, and his flights of fancy are not lurches of invention but genuine flights, launched from a roadway or a forest ridge. When he stands in his yard, baseball mitt in hand, with the evening moon hung high above and a single soft cone of light burning from the shed, he has suddenly slipped the bonds of California and strolled with ease into the world of Maurice Sendak or Edward Ardizzone. He comes upon E.T. as if in the pages of a book, and, in their ensuing friendship, he masters his infantile fear of the unknown. And that is why we need the guns.

Late in the movie, the police pursue E.T. across town as he sits in the basket of Elliott's bicycle, with Michael and three friends pedalling furiously by their side. Their path is eventually blocked by a couple of cops with shotguns, and that would seem to be that; the camera jump-cuts to Elliott's face, as he shuts his eyes—in horror, or in prayer? We all know what comes next: the five bikes lift off like jets, and all the burdens of anxiety in the audience, everything that is most earthbound in our lives, are cut loose and set adrift. This is cinema without gravity, a ballooning of joy that makes people laugh out loud; if Fred Astaire ever saw the movie, he must have nodded in recognition. For the new cut, however, Spielberg has digitally removed the guns—a small, honorable, and misguided nod to the conscience of the age. He does not want violence here, not with children present; yet what could be more satisfying, or more pacifying, than the spectacle of law enforcers slumped back against their cars, their weapons disarmed by the comedy of bliss?

Heaven knows what all this must have been like for the thousands of tired eyes in the Palais des Festivals, in Cannes, when the film had its tumultuous première there, in May of 1982. After two weeks of the Cannes Film Festival, you need a miracle to wake you up, let alone to make you weep. If, as Pauline Kael claimed, the first New York screening of "Last Tango in Paris" was an event to rank with the première of "The Rite of Spring," what does that make the appearance of "E.T."? Maybe May 26, 1982, for what it is worth, will come to be seen as a late-twentieth-century answer to June 10, 1865, the day on which "Tristan and Isolde" was unveiled in Munich and recharged romantic expectations overnight. In most ways, the film—demotic, aggressively populist, determinedly shorn of sex and of all connection to ancient myth—could not be more different from the opera, and yet we ask the same thing of both. We ask that they become the standard-bearer of modern love, that they carry us to the extremities of devotion; as we are rocked by the swell and swoon of John Williams's final chords, we realize, to our embarrassment, that "E.T" is the most enduring love story in recent cinema. True romance must prove its mettle in the face of thwartings, or on the verge of gulfs; Elliott and E.T. are not lovers, but they are literally star-crossed, and each is wrapped up in the fate of the other—the earthling's name is even bracketed by his friend's. What, exactly, it says about us that our most thundering waterfall of yearning and grief, worth more than seven hundred million dollars in global sales, should be reserved for the rapport between a small boy and an amphibious dwarf is a matter not for the critic but for the social historian, or for the better class of shrink.

When the film was launched in Britain, later in 1982, it had one very specific effect. I remember the headline well: "DI WEEPS FOR E.T." If memory serves, the Princess of Wales even left the cinema clutching a personal E.T., as if convinced that here was a guaranteed source of empathy. Diana had married the year before, in a ceremony that drew a comparable surge in the viewing figures. Which partnership would you have put money on to endure? The smiling soul of compassion and the small, wrinkly being of peculiar descent with an affinity for plants; or, on the other hand, Elliott and E.T.? As things turned out, it was no contest. Twenty years later, Diana is no more, and the wedding that was billed as the incarnation of a fairy tale tailed off in such acrimony that the very reputation of fairy tales, of hearts sundered and reforged, lay under threat. But the movie goes on and on; the spaceship is still a transport of delight, and E.T.'s heart, sunrise red, still beats like a baby's on an ultrasound scan. The director's cut, I am pleased to report, makes no effort to resolve the wrenching ambiguity of the creature's resurrection, after that heart stops: does he return to life because his ship is about to berth, and his fellows are summoning him, or because Elliott says "I love you," the camera catching his breath as it mists the window of the ice casket in which lie the remains—or so he believes—of his dead friend? Is the movie a brilliant retread of "Beauty and the Beast," or a hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy?



What Spielberg made, as only a Hollywood liberal can be trusted to make these days, is a conservative work of art. "E.T." exhorts us, just as "The Wizard of Oz" and "It's a Wonderful Life" exhort us, to go out on a limb and come back again to the main stem: to clutch at the promise of adventure while reserving the right to wind up where we began. "E.T. phone home," "There's no place like home": even the most wildly imagined pictures can sometimes be, in the profoundest sense, home movies, and the Spielberg who had, at the end of "Close Encounters," sent one character home to his mother, and the other into outer space, knew which direction to go next. By 1982, of course, the country had shifted from Carter to Reagan, and, however Spielberg voted, he was smart and sensitive enough, and sufficiently keen on Norman Rockwell, to pick up the traces of nostalgia in the air. E.T. the extra-terrestrial is outward bound, but "E.T." the movie looks inward and dreams of family. If that counts as catching the mood, then Spielberg was rewarded for his pains; it has been estimated that, in the first week of the film's release, he earned half a million dollars a day. Not bad, in a time of tax cuts. Since then, he has made a lot more money, and twelve more full-length movies, without quite recapturing the purity of "E.T." It feels pure in art, not just in sentiment; the first several minutes of the film run without dialogue, the story telling itself to your eyes, whereas the opening of Spielberg's "A.I.," which came out last year, all but sank beneath the explanatory drone of a voice-over. That film told the story of a fabricated boy who travelled across the country, and across thousands of years, in a quest for the real, but Elliott has been with us for twenty years, and we have yet to recover from his revelation: that there is nothing more real than sitting in your own back yard—waiting for the unreal to come down, take a handful of candy, and fly you to the moon. ♦

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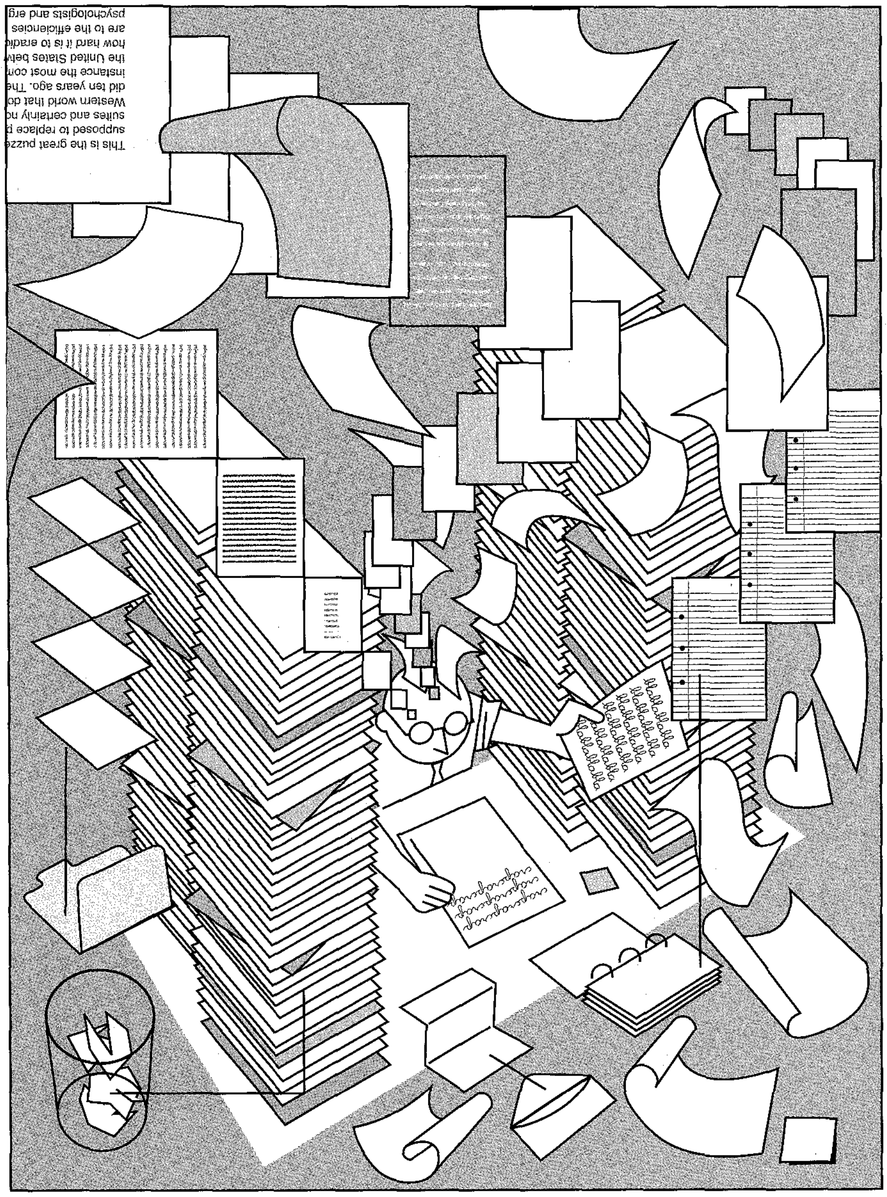
THE SOCIAL LIFE OF PAPER

Looking for method in the mess.

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL



For "knowledge workers," piles of paper represent the process of active, ongoing thinking.

On a busy day, a typical air-traffic controller might be in charge of as many as twenty-five airplanes at a time—some ascending, some descending, each at a different altitude and travelling at a different speed. He peers at a large, monochromatic radar console, tracking the movement of tiny tagged blips moving slowly across the screen. He talks to the sector where a plane is headed, and talks to the pilots passing through his sector, and talks to the other controllers about any new traffic on the horizon. And, as a controller juggles all those planes overhead, he scribbles notes on little pieces of paper, moving them around on his desk as he does. Air-traffic control depends on computers and radar. It also depends, heavily, on paper and ink.

When people talk about the need to modernize the American air-traffic-control system, this is, in large part, what they are referring to. Whenever a plane takes off, the basic data about the flight—the type of plane, the radar I.D. number, the requested altitude, the destination—are printed out on a stiff piece of paper, perhaps one and a half by six and a half inches, known as a flight strip. And as the plane passes through each sector of the airspace the controller jots down, using a kind of shorthand, everything new that is happening to the plane—its speed, say, and where it's heading, clearances from ground control, holding instructions, comments on the pilot. It's a method that dates back to the days before radar, and it drives critics of the air-traffic-control system crazy. Why, in this day and age, are planes being handled like breakfast orders in a roadside diner?

This is one of the great puzzles of the modern workplace. Computer technology was supposed to replace paper. But that hasn't happened. Every country in the Western world uses more paper today, on a per-capita basis, than it did ten years ago. The consumption of uncoated free-sheet paper, for instance—the most common kind of office paper—rose almost fifteen per cent in the United States between 1995 and 2000. This is generally taken as evidence of how hard it is to eradicate old, wasteful habits and of how stubbornly resistant we are to the efficiencies offered by computerization. A number of cognitive psychologists and ergonomics experts, however, don't agree. Paper has persisted, they argue, for very good reasons: when it comes to performing certain kinds of cognitive tasks, paper has many advantages over computers. The dismay people feel at the sight of a messy desk—or the spectacle of air-traffic controllers tracking flights through notes scribbled on paper strips—arises from a fundamental confusion about the role that paper plays in our lives.

The case for paper is made most eloquently in "The Myth of the Paperless Office" (M.I.T.; $24.95), by two social scientists, Abigail Sellen and Richard Harper. They begin their book with an account of a study they conducted at the International Monetary Fund, in Washington, D.C. Economists at the I.M.F.

RICHARD McGUIRE

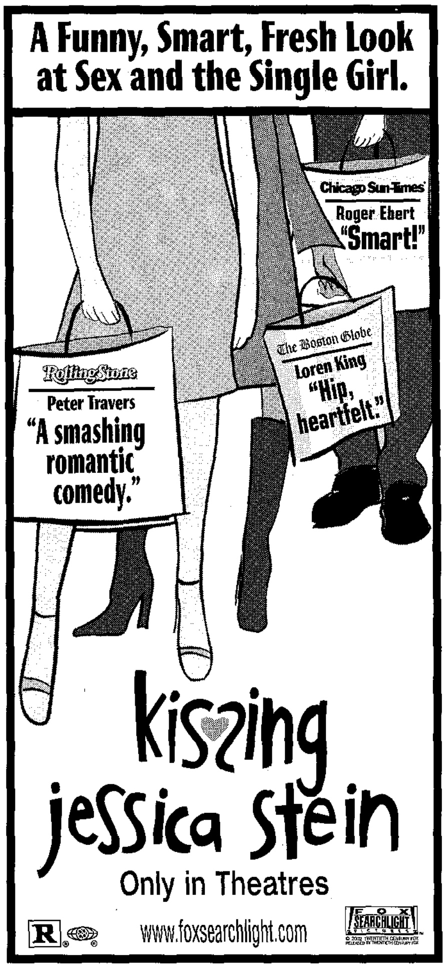
spend most of their time writing reports on complicated economic questions, work that would seem to be perfectly suited to sitting in front of a computer. Nonetheless, the I.M.F. is awash in paper, and Sellen and Harper wanted to find out why. Their answer is that the business of writing reports—at least at the I.M.F.—is an intensely collaborative process, involving the professional judgments and contributions of many people. The economists bring drafts of reports to conference rooms, spread out the relevant pages, and negotiate changes with one other. They go back to their offices and jot down comments in the margin, taking advantage of the freedom offered by the informality of the handwritten note. Then they deliver the annotated draft to the author in person, taking him, page by page, through the suggested changes. At the end of the process, the author spreads out all the pages with comments on his desk and starts to enter them on the computer—moving the pages around as he works, organizing and reorganizing, saving and discarding.

Without paper, this kind of collaborative, iterative work process would be much more difficult. According to Sellen and Harper, paper has a unique set of "affordances"—that is, qualities that permit specific kinds of uses. Paper is tangible: we can pick up a document, flip through it, read little bits here and there, and quickly get a sense of it. (In another study on reading habits, Sellen and Harper observed that in the workplace, people almost never read a document sequentially, from beginning to end, the way they would read a novel.) Paper is spatially flexible, meaning that we can spread it out and arrange it in the way that suits us best. And it's tailorable: we can easily annotate it, and scribble on it as we read, without altering the original text. Digital documents, of course, have their own affordances. They can be easily searched, shared, stored, accessed remotely, and linked to other relevant material. But they lack the affordances that really matter to a group of people working together on a report. Sellen and Harper write:

> Because paper is a physical embodiment of information, actions performed in relation to paper are, to a large extent, made visible to one's colleagues. Reviewers sitting around a desk could tell whether a colleague was turning toward or away from a report; whether she was flicking through it or setting it aside. Contrast this with watching someone across a desk looking at a document on a laptop. What are they looking at? Where in the document are they? Are they really reading their e-mail? Knowing these things is important because they help a group coördinate its discussions and reach a shared understanding of what is being discussed.

Paper enables a certain kind of thinking. Picture, for instance, the top of your desk. Chances are that you have a keyboard and a computer screen off to one side, and a clear space roughly eighteen inches square in front of your chair. What covers the rest of the desktop is probably piles—piles of papers, journals, magazines, binders, postcards, videotapes, and all the other artifacts of the knowledge economy. The piles look like a mess, but they aren't. When a group at Apple Computer studied piling behavior several years ago, they found that even the most disorderly piles usually make perfect sense to the piler, and that office workers could hold forth in great detail about the precise history and meaning of their piles. The pile closest to the cleared, eighteen-inch-square working area, for example, generally represents the most urgent business, and within that pile the most important document of all is likely to be at the top. Piles are living, breathing archives. Over time, they get broken down and resorted, sometimes chronologically and sometimes thematically and sometimes chronologically and thematically; clues about certain documents may be physically embedded in the file by, say, stacking a certain piece of paper at an angle or inserting dividers into the stack.

But why do we pile documents instead of filing them? Because piles represent the process of active, ongoing thinking. The psychologist Alison Kidd, whose research Sellen and Harper refer to extensively, argues that "knowledge workers" use the physical space of the desktop to hold "ideas which they cannot yet categorize or even decide how they might use." The messy desk is not necessarily a sign of disorganization. It may be a sign of complexity: those who deal with many unresolved ideas simultaneously cannot sort and file the papers on their desks, because they haven't yet sorted and filed the ideas in their head. Kidd writes that many of the people she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talked to use the papers on their desks as contextual cues to "recover a complex set of threads without difficulty and delay" when they come in on a Monday morning, or after their work has been interrupted by a phone call. What we see when we look at the piles on our desks is, in a sense, the contents of our brains.

Sellen and Harper arrived at similar findings when they did some consulting work with a chocolate manufacturer. The people in the firm they were most interested in were the buyers—the staff who handled the company's relationships with its venders, from cocoa and sugar manufacturers to advertisers. The buyers kept folders (containing contracts, correspondence, meeting notes, and so forth) on every supplier they had dealings with. The company wanted to move the information in those documents online, to save space and money, and make it easier for everyone in the firm to have access to it. That sounds like an eminently rational thing to do. But when Sellen and Harper looked at the folders they discovered that they contained all kinds of idiosyncratic material—advertising paraphernalia, printouts of e-mails, presentation notes, and letters—much of which had been annotated in the margins with thoughts and amendments and, they write, "perhaps most important, comments about problems and issues with a supplier's performance not intended for the supplier's eyes." The information in each folder was organized—if it was organized at all—according to the whims of the particular buyer. Whenever other people wanted to look at a document, they generally had to be walked through it by the buyer who "owned" it, because it simply wouldn't make sense otherwise. The much advertised advantage of digitizing documents—that they could be made available to anyone, at any time—was illusory: documents cannot speak for themselves. "All of this emphasized that most of what constituted a buyer's expertise resulted from involvement with the buyer's own suppliers through a long history of phone calls and meetings," Sellen and Harper write:

> The correspondence, notes, and other documents such discussions would produce formed a significant part of the documents buyers kept. These materials therefore *supported* rather than *constituted* the expertise of the buyers. In other words, the knowledge existed not so much in the documents as in the heads of the people who owned them—in their memories of what the documents were, in their knowledge of the history of that supplier relationship, and in the recollections that were prompted whenever they went through the files.

This idea that paper facilitates a highly specialized cognitive and social process is a far cry from the way we have historically thought about the stuff. Paper first began to proliferate in the workplace in the late nineteenth century as part of the move toward "systematic management." To cope with the complexity of the industrial economy, managers were instituting company-wide policies and demanding monthly, weekly, or even daily updates from their subordinates. Thus was born the monthly sales report, and the office manual and the internal company newsletter. The typewriter took off in the eighteen-eighties, making it possible to create documents in a fraction of the time it had previously taken, and that was followed closely by the advent of carbon paper, which meant that a typist could create ten copies of that document simultaneously. If you were, say, a railroad company, then you would now have a secretary at the company headquarters type up a schedule every week, setting out what train was travelling in what direction at what time, because in the mid-nineteenth century collisions were a terrible problem. Then the secretary would make ten carbon copies of that schedule and send them out to the stations along your railway line. Paper was important not to facilitate creative collaboration and thought but as an instrument of control.

Perhaps no one embodied this notion more than the turn-of-the-century reformer Melvil Dewey. Dewey has largely been forgotten by history, perhaps because he was such a nasty fellow—an outspoken racist and anti-Semite—but in his day he dominated America's thinking about the workplace. He invented the Dewey decimal system, which revolutionized the organization of libraries. He was an ardent advocate of shorthand and of the metric system, and was so obsessed with time-saving and simplification that he changed his first name from Melville to the more logical Melvil. (He also pushed for the adoption of "catalog" in place of "catalogue," and of "thruway" to describe major highways, a usage that survives to this day in New York State). Dewey's principal business was something called the Library Bureau, which was essentially the Office Depot of his day, selling card catalogues, cabinets, office chairs and tables, pre-printed business forms, and, most important, filing cabinets. Previously, businessmen had stored their documents in cumbersome cases, or folded and labelled the pieces of paper and stuck them in the pigeonholes of the secretary desks so common in the Victorian era. What Dewey proposed was essentially an enlarged version of a card catalogue, where paper documents hung vertically in long drawers.

The vertical file was a stunning accomplishment. In those efficiency-obsessed days, it prompted books and articles and debates and ended up winning a gold medal at the 1893 World's Fair, because it so neatly addressed the threat of disorder posed by the proliferation of paper. What good was that railroad schedule, after all, if it was lost on someone's desk? Now a railroad could buy one of Dewey's vertical filing cabinets, and put the schedule under "S," where everyone could find it. In "Scrolling Forward: Making Sense of Documents in the Digital Age" (Arcade; $24.95), the computer scientist David M. Levy argues that Dewey was the anti-Walt Whitman, and that his vision of regularizing and standardizing life ended up being just as big a component of the American psyche as Whitman's appeal to embrace the world just as it is. That seems absolutely right. The fact is, the thought of all those memos and reports and manuals made Dewey anxious, and that anxiety has never really gone away, even in the face of evidence that paper is no longer something to be anxious about.

When Thomas Edison invented the phonograph, for example, how did he imagine it would be used? As a dictation device that a businessman could pass around the office in place of a paper memo. In 1945, the computer pioneer Vannevar Bush imagined what he called a "memex"—a mechanized library and filing cabinet, on which an office worker would store all his relevant information without the need for paper files at all. So, too, with the information-technology wizards who have descended on the workplace in recent years. Instead of a real desktop, they have offered us the computer desktop, where cookie-cutter icons run in orderly rows across a sooth-

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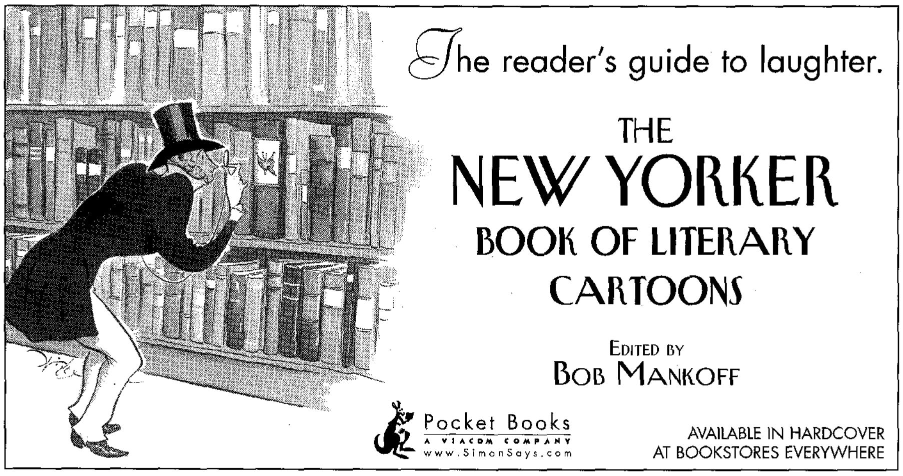
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Sellen and Harper include in their book a photograph of an office piled high with stacks of paper. The occupant of the office—a researcher in Xerox's European research facility—was considered neither ineffective nor inefficient. Quite the contrary: he was, they tell us, legendary in being able to find any document in his office very quickly. But the managers of the laboratory were uncomfortable with his office because of what it said about their laboratory. They were, after all, an organization looking to develop digital workplace solutions. "They wanted to show that this was a workplace reaching out to the future rather than being trapped in an inefficient past," Sellen and Harper write. "Yet, if this individual's office was anything to go by, the reality was that this workplace of the future was full of paper." Whenever senior colleagues came by the office, then, the man with the messy desk was instructed to put his papers in boxes and hide them under the stairs. The irony is, of course, that it was not the researcher who was trapped in an inefficient past but the managers. They were captives of the nineteenth-century notion that paper was most useful when it was put away. They were channelling Melvil Dewey. But this is a different era. In the tasks that face modern knowledge workers, paper is most useful out in the open, where it can be shuffled and sorted and annotated and spread out. The mark of the contemporary office is not the file. It's the pile.

Air-traffic controllers are quintessential knowledge workers. They perform a rarefied version of the task faced by the economists at the I.M.F. when they sit down at the computer with the comments and drafts of five other people spread around them, or the manager when she gets to her office on Monday morning, looks at the piles of papers on her desk, and tries to make sense of all the things she has to do in the coming week. When an air-traffic controller looks at his radar, he sees a two-dimensional picture of where the planes in his sector are. But what he needs to know is where his planes will be. He has to be able to take the evidence from radar, what he hears from the pilots and other controllers, and what he has written down on the flight strips in front of him, and construct a three-dimensional "picture" of all the planes in his sector. Psychologists call the ability to create that mental picture "situation awareness." "Situation awareness operates on three levels," says Mica Endsley, the president of S.A. Technologies, in Georgia, and perhaps the country's leading expert on the subject. "One is perceiving. Second is understanding what the information means—analogous to reading comprehension. That's where you or I would have problems. We'd see the blips on the screen, and it wouldn't mean anything to us. The highest level, though, is projection—the ability to predict which aircraft are coming in and when. You've got to be able to look into the future, probably by as much as five minutes."

Psychologists believe that those so-called flight strips play a major role in helping controllers achieve this situation awareness. Recently, for example, Wendy Mackay, a computer scientist now working in Paris, spent several months at an air-traffic-control facility near Orly Airport, in Paris. The French air-traffic-control system is virtually identical to the American system. One controller, the planning controller, is responsible for the radar. He has a partner, whose job is to alert the radar controller to incoming traffic, and what Mackay observed was how beautifully the strips enable efficient interaction between these two people. The planning controller, for instance, overhears what his partner is saying on the radio, and watches him annotate strips. If he has a new strip, he might keep it just out of his partner's visual field until it is relevant. "She [the planner] moves it into his peripheral view if the strip should be dealt with soon, but not immediately," Mackay writes. "If the problem is urgent, she will physically move it into his focal view, placing the strip on top of the stripboard or, rarely, inserting it."

Those strips moving in and out of the peripheral view of the controller serve as cognitive cues, which the controller uses to help keep the "picture" of his sector clear in his head. When taking over a control position, controllers touch and rearrange the strips in front of them. When they are given a new strip, they are forced mentally to register a new flight and the new traffic situation. By writing on the strips, they can off-load information, keeping their minds free to attend to other matters. The controller's flight strips are like the piles of paper on a desk: they are the physical manifestations of what goes on inside his head. Is it any wonder that the modernization of the air-traffic-control system has taken so long? No one wants to do anything that might disrupt that critical mental process.

This is, of course, a difficult conclusion for us to accept. Like the managers of the office-technology lab, we have in our heads the notion that an air-traffic-control center ought to be a pristine and gleaming place, full of the latest electronic gadgetry. We think of all those flight strips as cluttering and confusing the work of the office, and we fret about where all that paper will go. But, as Sellen and Harper point out, we needn't worry. It is only if paper's usefulness is in the information written directly on it that it must be stored. If its usefulness lies in the promotion of ongoing creative thinking, then, once that thinking is finished, the paper becomes superfluous. The solution to our paper problem, they write, is not to use less paper but to *keep* less paper. Why bother filing at all? Everything we know about the workplace suggests that few if any knowledge workers ever refer to documents again once they have filed them away, which should come as no surprise, since paper is a lousy way to archive information. It's too hard to search and it takes up too much space. Besides, we all have the best filing system ever invented, right there on our desks—the personal computer. That is the irony of the P.C.: the workplace problem that it solves is the nineteenth-century anxiety. It's a better filing cabinet than the original vertical file, and if Dewey were alive today, he'd no doubt be working very happily in an information-technology department somewhere. The problem that paper solves, by contrast, is the problem that most concerns us today, which is how to support knowledge work. In fretting over paper, we have been tripped up by a historical accident of innovation, confused by the assumption that the most important invention is always the most recent. Had the computer come first—and paper second—no one would raise an eyebrow at the flight strips cluttering our air-traffic-control centers. ◆

BRIEFLY NOTED

Report from Ground Zero, *by Dennis Smith (Viking; $24.95).* The first-person narratives in this account of the rescue efforts at the World Trade Center constitute a tremendously powerful chronicle of September 11th. The language of the firefighters and police officers is blunt and vivid, the details are sharply etched, and the fractured stories—particularly of those who were inside the towers but somehow escaped—offer a Cubist vision of the day's chaos. The book's description of the disaster's aftermath is less successful: Smith conveys the ritualistic and sacramental nature of the search for the victims' remains, but he lapses too frequently into sentimentality and abstract meditations on patriotism and courage. The author, who also wrote the gripping "Report from Engine Co. 82," does best when he lets the images speak for themselves: the airplane luggage scattered across the plaza; the waves of firemen disappearing into the stairwells; the indelible sound—"like an M-80 firecracker," one man says—of bodies hitting the ground; and the moment when suddenly there was "nothing but dust."

Breaking Clean, *by Judy Blunt (Knopf; $24).* Born in 1954 to poor homesteaders on the Montana prairie, the author inherited a tradition of intense work and fierce isolation. She realized early that she was doomed to a supporting role on the family ranch; although she could work cattle and tractors, she writes, "I also learned to . . . reserve my opinion when the men were talking." This unflinching memoir is framed by Blunt's eventual decision to leave the rancher she had married at the age of eighteen and the only way of life she'd ever known. A sense of mourning underlies her account, and she honors the land that she still loves by making us intimate with its smallest details: after a thirty-six-hour blizzard, cows stand frozen, "eyes sealed tight under an inch of milky ice."

What Happened to Johnnie Jordan?, *by Jennifer Toth (Free Press; $25).* In accounts of dysfunctional families, children are often the victims of violence; here, though, a child is both victim and perpetrator. The child in question is Johnnie Jordan, a fifteen-year-old Ohioan who brutally murdered his foster mother in 1996, hacking her to death with a hatchet and then setting her on fire. Through a series of interviews with Jordan, his foster father, and others within the child-welfare system, Toth constructs an agonizing portrait of a boy who was repeatedly abused from a very young age and repeatedly failed by the system responsible for protecting him. Though she tries to link Jordan's story with other famous American teen-rage cases, she is somewhat limited by the exceptional nature of her subject. Nevertheless, her report is cautionary in the strongest sense.

Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History, *by Elizabeth Barlow Rogers (Abrams; $75).* This sumptuously illustrated book expands the definition of landscaping from the usual suspects—Versailles, Tivoli, and Central Park—to include, on the one hand, Stonehenge and the Pyramids and, on the other, Disneyland. The result is a comprehensive history of human interaction with the land. Barlow Rogers, a landscape planner, considers that the main shift has been from a sacral idea of place to a conception of "value-neutral" space governed by mathematical principles of perspective. So, while ancient sites reflected pagan cosmologies and animistic beliefs, in Renaissance landscapes the experience of the individual viewer became central. When Petrarch, a keen gardener, explained why he had tried to climb Mont Ventoux, his words were quintessentially those of a Renaissance man: "My only motive was to see what so great an elevation had to offer."

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THE ART WORLD

DO IT YOURSELF

Biennial follies at the Whitney.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Lawrence R. Rinder, the chief curator of contemporary art at the Whitney Museum, introduces the busy but extraordinarily bland Whitney Biennial by invoking the events of September 11th. "There is a profound sense of being at the most portentous crossroad in history," he writes in the show's catalogue. Artists are a "profound resource for a society that has both been robbed of a potent symbol and is casting about for new images and metaphors." Rinder says that an important criterion for his selection of the Biennial's artists was a "powerful sense of conviction." And yet the show, in my view, conveys neither sense nor conviction, let alone power. A reason for the shortfall lurks in another introductory remark by Rinder: "Perhaps beauty and irony are luxuries of peacetime, something to cherish as much as unrestricted travel and life without gas masks." If this assessment of our embattled state seems exaggerated (gas masks?), it may be because grave times are never grave enough for someone who is in the grip of the sort of moral excitement that feeds on scares and abnegations. War or no war, Rinder has a predilection for drab, timid stuff.

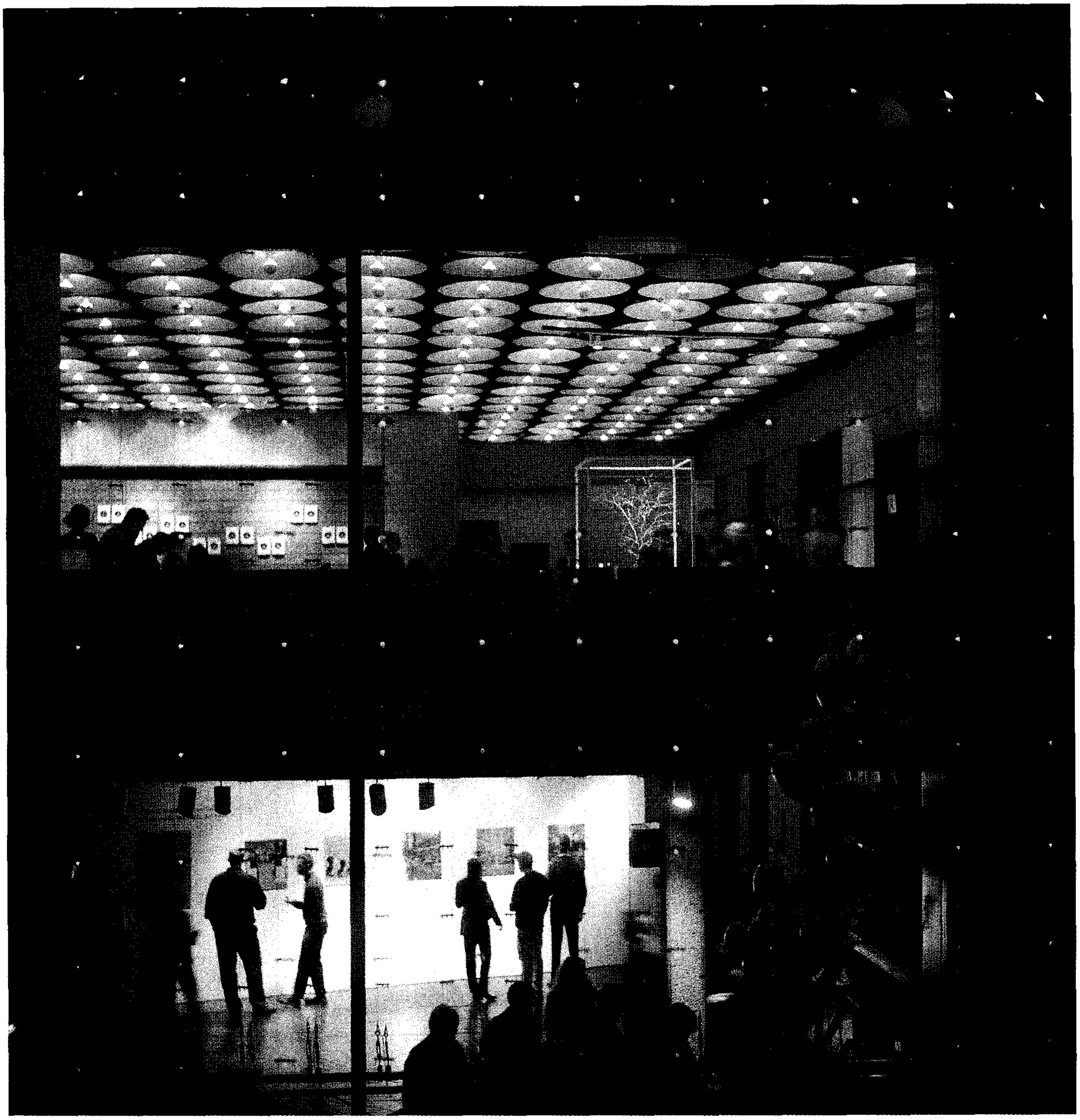
The Biennial displays works by a hundred and thirteen artists and collaborative teams on four floors of the museum and, as an unprecedented bonus, in Central Park—where a sculptor named Roxy Paine has expended a great deal of effort to give passersby a mild frisson by erecting a fifty-foot stainless-steel elm tree. As usual, most of the artists are based in New York or California, though Rinder reports that he and his assisting curators scouted in "forty-three cities and towns in twenty-seven states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico." What did he learn out there? He reports that he discovered many young artists who were aware of "the need to perform some greater role than mere decoration or ironic critique," and he adds that they were "looking for ways to sustain creative practices without concern for the art market or art-world accolades. Their most important concerns seemed to be cheap rent, communities of like-minded individuals, and opportunities to show in their own localities." As it turns out, strained sincerity and negligible ambition dominate the show. So does formlessness. The old avant-garde enterprise of blurring boundaries among the arts and whatever is fashionably thought to be life operates with pitiless efficiency, producing a perfect fog of middling effects.

Youth-intensive, the new Biennial makes only a few nods to veteran artists, of whom the most prominent is Vija Celmins, represented by two small paintings of spiderwebs. Apart from these works and a few others, including inventive, subtle sculptures by Rachel Harrison and Evan Holloway, serious painting and sculpture are scarce. Such activities figure only residually in insouciantly trashy installations that celebrate the do-it-yourself, art-kid scenes that proliferate throughout the land. Two San Francisco artists, Margaret Kilgallen (who died last year, of cancer) and Chris Johanson, take the prize for forced high spirits. Each of them consumes immense amounts of space with wacky wall-painting, ramshackle carpentry, and cutesy text. (Imagine prom decorations by a high school's geek coterie.) Elsewhere, there is a heavy atmosphere of art-school labs in which the latest digital tools are put to work on arbitrary tasks.

Once past the ticket taker, the first work you encounter is a computer that stands ready to download animations of tap dancers (a male, a female) onto your Palm Pilot, presuming you have one. Audio works, big-scale photographs, installations about architecture and films, and video projections are everywhere. To view it all takes at least a day. "Vita brevis, video longa," grumped a friend of mine.

There are pleasures, if one goes with the flow of Rinder's New Age-ish dewiness and indulges artists who strive, at all costs, to please. This Biennial is undemanding—what with frisky works about snowboarding, mosh pits, and psychics—and it is remarkably free of abrasive politics and overt references to sex. Rinder, who calls one of the show's three nebulous sections "Tribes" (the others are "Beings" and "Spaces"), is hardly an advocate of multiculturalism. "What future is there for humanity if patterns of division and distrust persist?" he asks in the catalogue. Perhaps a future resembling human history so far, one might answer; but why be severe? The boys and girls in the show plainly mean no harm. They may adopt the installational, public modes that rode high in the nineteen-nineties, but they do so without the social and critical militancies that marked that decade—and that boiled over in the notorious Biennial of 1993, during which viewers were offered buttons that read, "I can't imagine ever wanting to be white." The new niceness seems to be acknowledged with a whiff of (oops) irony in Lorna Simpson's "Easy to Remember," an elegant DVD projection by a star of the politicized nineties. The mouths of fifteen white and black professional singers, shown in closeup, hum along with John Coltrane's jazz rendition of the great Richard Rodgers tune. Lorenz Hart's lyrics, which infuse past pleasure with present pain, are unheard but irresistibly evoked. This happens to be one of the show's handful of pieces that are hard to forget.

I was startled to read, in an article about Rinder by Peter Plagens in *Newsweek*, that the two artists who most moved me almost didn't make the cut. Up to the last minute, Rinder and his team debated whether to include works by Chan Chao and Stephen Dean as art or to reject them as journalism and anthropology. Chao's large color photographs portray young people caught up in a guerrilla insurgency along Myanmar's borders with Thailand and India. Dean's video shows a celebration of the annual Hindu festival of Holi, during which people joyously pelt and splash each other with powdered pigments and colored water. Are these things art? The question lacks traction in a show in which "art" is moot



Crowds at the Whitney sample a Biennial that celebrates feckless youth who aim to please. Photograph by Whitney Lawson.

except as a catchall for objects and activities that aren't clearly something else or—as in the skilled but self-absorbed comic strips of Chris Ware—are too cool to ignore. (Like television advertisers, this Biennial pants after the youth market.) Chao's heartbreaking pictures and Dean's sensuous video remind me why I like art. Addressing their subjects with scrupulous formality, they extend their mediums to see and say what is there to be seen and said. They are untainted by fuss or narcissism. Chao and Dean stand out sharply. We have come to a strange pass when artistic rigor enters the art world via workaday visual professions.

Several works display conspicuous discipline, but to trivial purpose. I am thinking of Paine's tree and a snazzily executed sculpture of a Bell Atlantic pay phone by Robert Lazzarini. A glamorously lighted stage set of surreal musical instruments by Christian Marclay—including an accordion with a meandering bellows as long as a python—also features technical whoop-de-do for its own desultory sake. It hardly matters how well something is done when it doesn't seem worth doing. Somewhat more absorbing is Jeremy Blake's video program, in which photographs of a ghost-haunted mansion alternate, in slow fades, with spectral, brilliant color fields—a sort of ectoplasm à la Morris Louis. But I feel that Blake is showing off, rather than using his full talent; once I had admired the piece, it ceased to interest me. The 2002 Whitney Biennial is dominated by such work. For all of Rinder's high-minded claims, it spreads the news that American art today can be anything except necessary. ♦

THE SKY LINE

HIGH-TECH EMPORIUMS

Prada and Toys R Us have much in common.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

In 1948, Frank Lloyd Wright redesigned a home-furnishings shop on Maiden Lane in San Francisco for Lillian and Vere Morris. His plan called for a multistory interior space but no traditional display windows, which worried the Morrises, and Wright assured them that he was thinking of their commercial needs. "We are not going to dump your beautiful merchandise on the street," he wrote, "but create an arch-tunnel of glass, into which the passers-by may look and be enticed. As they penetrate further into the entrance, seeing the shop inside . . . they will suddenly push open the door, and you've got them. . . . Like a mousetrap!" Rem Koolhaas has given Prada more or less the same advice. Koolhaas doesn't think much of the old modernist idea of transparency, which says that you put goods in big, open windows and let them speak for themselves. He also believes that if Prada is to survive what seems to be overexpansion it can't keep building those mint-green stores everywhere. Koolhaas, like Wright, has good marketing instincts, and after studying Prada's problems, he told the company that it should start selling architecture along with the handbags.

Koolhaas has suggested that to avoid "the Flagship syndrome: a megalomaniac accumulation of the obvious," Prada should create a series of "epicenters," or super-sized stores, each a distinct work of design. This seems sensible enough. A company that has based the aura of its brand on cutting-edge design might be well advised to think in terms of a cutting-edge environment. Alas, however, the first of these new stores, the Prada shop at 575 Broadway, in SoHo, is not a staggering reinvention of the retail environment, no matter what Koolhaas and his followers claim. The enormous new store, which cost somewhere in the neighborhood of forty million dollars, combines some hard-edged late modernism with some fancy technology (glass-enclosed dressing rooms that turn translucent at the touch of a button), and comes in a package that, like a lot of Koolhaas's work, mixes roughness with sleekness in a way that never manages to avoid seeming self-conscious. The architectural centerpiece is a set of zebrawood steps, like bleachers—what Koolhaas calls "the wave"—which descend from the street-level entry to the main selling floor, one level below. This creates both selling space and performing space, since the steps can be used as seating. But most of the time they are covered with shoes. What the wave does best is disguise the fact that most of this spectacular store is actually in the basement.

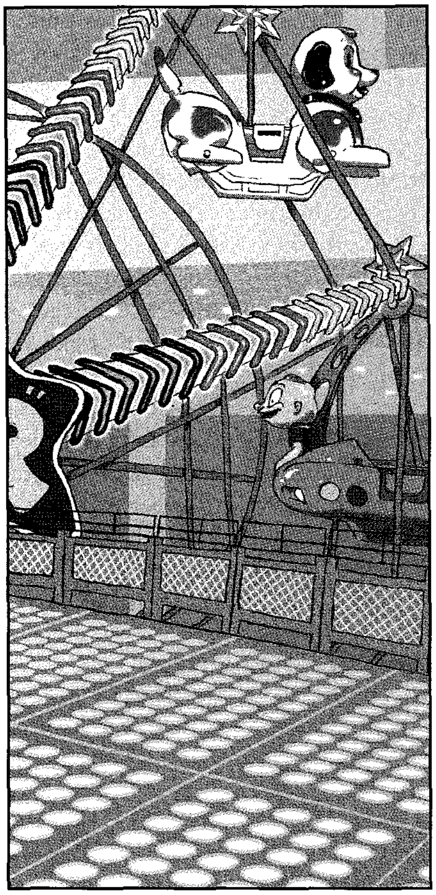
The wave reminded me of the huge Ferris wheel in the new Toys R Us store in Times Square, which opened a few weeks before Prada SoHo. Both Prada and Toys R Us suffer from a sense that their brands are being diluted, and the New York stores were conceived as an antidote to this. The Toys R Us store, like Prada SoHo, has an underground selling area—although most of the store is aboveground—and the designers wanted to camouflage what could be perceived as dark and unpleasant grottoes. The sixty-foot-high Ferris wheel makes customers think that they are in one big space, and it makes Koolhaas's wave at Prada seem tame. The Toys R Us store was designed not by a famous architect but by a group that included Joanne Newbold, a store planner, and Gensler, a large commercial architecture firm. It is fair to say that the world of design did not greet the opening of the store with the same degree of reverence as it did Prada SoHo, but the effect created at Toys R Us is similar, and a lot less pretentious. Of course, Toys R Us is quite a bit bigger than Prada. The architects had the equivalent of a four-story atrium to work with, and more than a hundred thousand square feet of selling space.

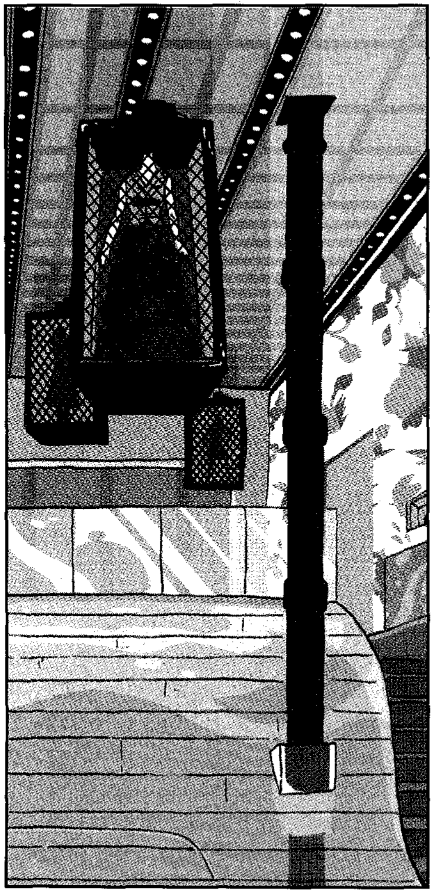
I like the Times Square Toys R Us a lot, in large part because it demonstrates Koolhaas's theories more clearly than Koolhaas's store does. It's exuberant, and doesn't try to be important. It is probably the best indoor public space around Times Square. The Ferris wheel is a perfect blend of entertainment and hard sell. It has fourteen passenger cars, each of them an "individually themed cab," which is to say that one car is based on Mr. & Mrs. Potato Head and another on a Tonka truck. Mr. Monopoly has a car, as does Barbie. Much of the store is divided into environments with special themes, including a Jurassic Park exhibit where dinosaur toys are sold and a Lego shop containing huge Lego versions of the Empire State Building and the Chrysler Building so accurate that they should be given to the Skyscraper Museum. What I like best, however, is the store's glass façade, which is sometimes transparent and sometimes covered with a series of images on automated panels that roll down together, like shades. The façade is a continuously changing billboard. If you want to see how technology can render traditional space obsolete, Toys R Us demonstrates it much more effectively than Prada.

It's easier to be loose when you're selling twenty-dollar Barbie dolls rather than six-hundred-dollar shirts, of course, but the new SoHo Prada—which Koolhaas and his Rotterdam-based firm, the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, designed in association with ARO in New York—is particularly stiff. It makes you feel like you're being watched. Koolhaas has built his aesthetic on unexpected juxtapositions, mixing common elements of popular culture with refined, high-end objects, and the SoHo store seems to adhere to a code that most of us aren't privy to. One part of the downstairs selling floor is covered in unpainted green plasterboard, decorated with white spackling over the joints and nails. It's a nice green, even though the unfinished look turns out to be fake. Koolhaas preferred the color of a British gypsum board that wasn't thick enough to meet New York City fire laws, so the wall is actually a veneer over another wall. An imported veneer, no less.

So much for roughness as the new face of luxury. There is real roughness, and there is, well, Prada roughness, which is as contrived as any opulent architectural detail. I'm sure that the architects who have been trooping through the space have

TOMER HANUKA





Brand refurbishers: the Ferris wheel at Toys R Us in Times Square and metal display cases at the Prada store in SoHo.

been bedazzled by Koolhaas's elevator, a magnificent cylinder of glass perched on a hydraulic piston. It was fabricated in Italy, and it is so exquisitely detailed that you can't see any moving metal parts in the elevator cab, only sliding surfaces of glass. The elevator cost nearly a million dollars and took ten months to design, but I had trouble cracking the code here, too. I couldn't figure out why it called for rough walls and stunningly elegant elevators. Why not shimmering, elegant walls and a rough, industrial elevator?

On the street level, much of the Prada merchandise is displayed in uncomfortable-looking metal cages that hang from the ceiling and can be moved around, allowing the store to be, in effect, redesigned in an instant. Never mind that this, like a lot of things about the store, is an exceedingly expensive answer to a relatively simple problem. Plenty of stores have had movable, flexible display systems for years, although it was not considered a priority to hang them from the ceiling. You could probably build a dozen Gap stores for the price of some of Koolhaas's technology here.

Designing a store that attempts to combine shopping with entertainment and technology is nothing new, and, other than the juxtaposition of the raw and the refined, there isn't much at all in the way of architectural ideas at Prada SoHo. Nevertheless, judging from the awe with which some of Koolhaas's pronouncements are received, you would think that he had the freshest take on the popular landscape since Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown. The latest Koolhaas screed, the "Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping" (Taschen; $50), written in collaboration with some of his students, asserts that "shopping is arguably the last remaining form of public activity. Through a battery of increasingly predatory forms, shopping has infiltrated, colonized, and even replaced, almost every aspect of urban life." This is the sort of thing that has given Koolhaas a reputation as a social critic.

It's too bad that he isn't more comfortable simply being an architect, because he is a very good one. The Prada store in SoHo is full of wonderful elements, beyond its extravagant elevator; there's exquisite pink resin shelving in one section, and a marble floor that recalls Prada's main store in Milan in another. Koolhaas is consistently inventive in his use of materials, and at his best he is a brilliant maker of form. But, at SoHo Prada, anyway, the whole is less than the sum of the parts. Koolhaas's current celebrity is based not on the beauty of his compositions but on the power of his rhetoric. He loves to rant about how outdated the traditional city is, and about the meaninglessness of public space in the age of technology. He seems to denounce consumerism, but then he winks and says let's make of it what we can, and you're never quite sure whether he intends to celebrate banality or complain about it, or if he's just figuring out how to profit from it.

There are no such conflicts at Toys R Us. John Eyler, the chairman of the company, says that he wants the Times Square store to be a "destination icon," and he seems to have understood instinctively that the way to reinvigorate a retail brand is to make a new store that isn't just bigger than all the others but has an altogether different image—in this case, a kind of conflation of a theme park and the urban energy of Forty-second Street. When Eyler talks about how the store will demonstrate his "strategic vision for renewing the company's growth heritage over the next few years," he's saying the same thing as Koolhaas when he says that "the epicenter store becomes a device that renews the brand by counteracting and destabilizing any received notion of what Prada is, does, or will become."

Still, there is some question about how much any of this matters. People now expect to be entertained when they shop—they want something to justify going out and not ordering off the Internet—but I suspect that architecture gets them through the door more effectively than it can get them to part with their cash. You need products inside that people want to buy. When I went back to SoHo after leaving the cacophony of Times Square the other day, the store that was supposed to show us the future seemed quiet, serene, and almost genteel. Koolhaas seems to have envisioned the Prada store overflowing with crowds, but the reality is that almost everything he designed looks better when the place is nearly empty and you can see it not as public space but, like so much architecture today, as a private indulgence. ♦

THE THEATRE

BOTTOM FEEDERS

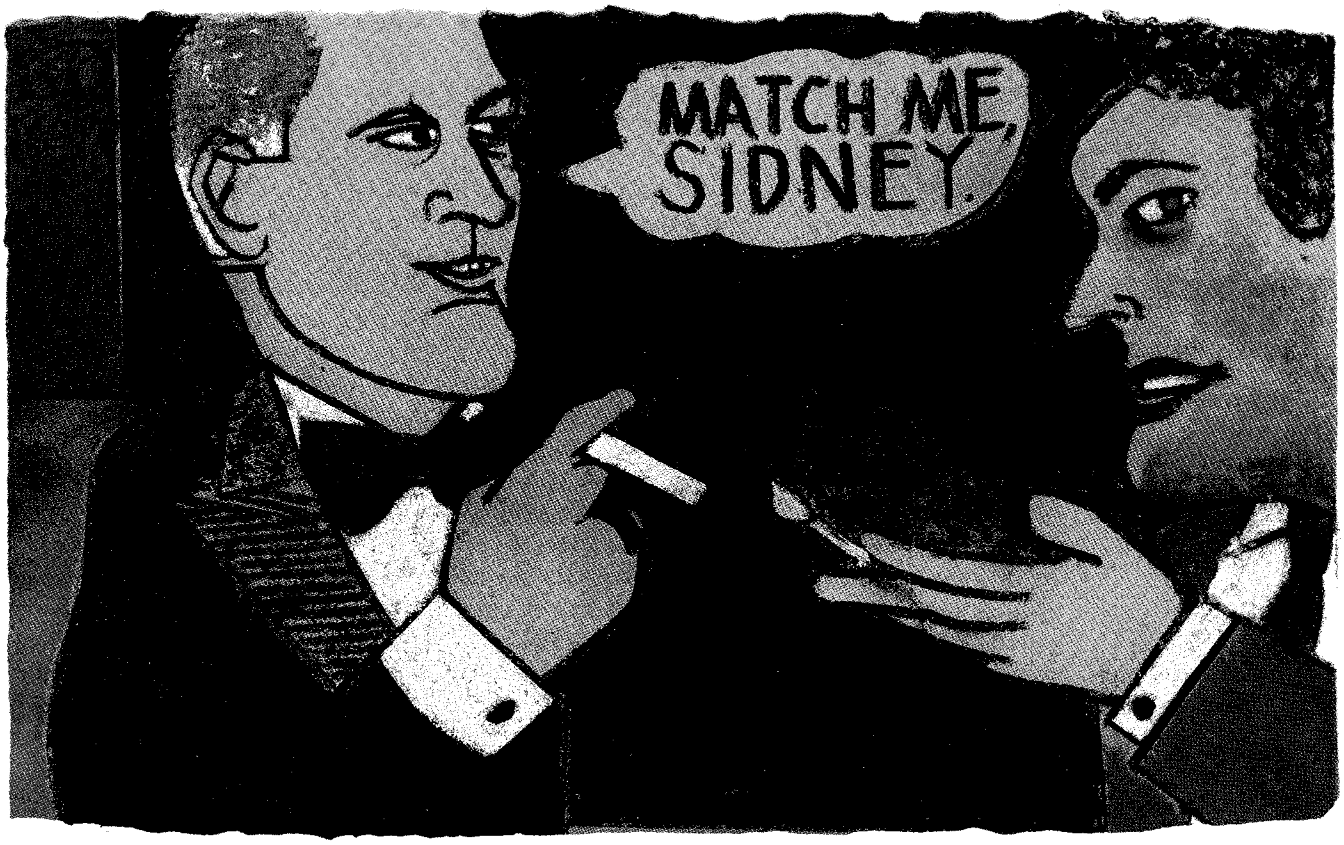
Gossip and Goldwyn.

BY JOHN LAHR

Even before "Sweet Smell of Success" begins (at the Martin Beck), J. J. Hunsecker's owlish eyes peer out at us from the gorgeous newsprint curtain, where the logo of his gossip column, "B-Way X-Ray," is emblazoned, like the billboard eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg in "The Great Gatsby," which "brood on over the solemn dumping ground" of Queens. Hunsecker's tabloid—which, in case there was any doubt as to the true identity of the character, resembles the New York *Daily Mirror*—seems to stretch out to infinity, duplicating over and over again the name-dropping snippets of his column's flip lingo: "Marilyn Monrooooohhhh . . . Miss Blondiful . . . sexploitation points." This type of demotic telegraphic afflatus, which captured something of the bravado and velocity of postwar America in the era of the greatest growth in wealth in world history, was, of course, first minted by Walter Winchell. Like Hunsecker, Winchell, who reigned as the granddaddy of Broadway gossip columnists from the mid-twenties to the mid-sixties, was a former vaudevillian, a man of imperial, almost mandarin power, who couldn't see a belt without hitting below it. His headquarters was Table 50 in the Cub Room at the Stork Club, where the whole world paid court, and, after closing, in a sort of ritual affirmation of his glorious survival, he would cruise the New York crime scenes until daybreak with a police radio in his car. Winchell's bantamcock swagger was adopted by James Cagney for his own tough-talking screen persona. Offscreen, Winchell was wooed first by F.D.R., to advance his political agenda, and then by Herbert Hoover, as a conduit for nefarious right-wing disinformation.

The notion of New York as a playground was propagated by Broadway's gossip columnists, and especially by Winchell, whose insatiable, driven personality made him a sort of contemporary Sir Epicure Mammon. He is therefore perfect material for the Broadway musical, which sings best about Manhattan, whose delirium for success, extravaganza of self-promotion, and violence of desperation are the soil out of which the form grows. "West Side Story," "Guys and Dolls," "On the Town," "Pal Joey," "Gypsy," "Company," and "A Chorus Line," among many, mythologize the sensational verve and venality of the city—the landscape of its desire. And "Sweet Smell of Success," adapted from the excellent Clifford Odets–Ernest Lehman movie (1957) by a high-powered artistic team headed by the director Nicholas Hytner, is pitched at a comparable level of ambition.

At first glance, "Sweet Smell" seems to have got it right. Bob Crowley's behemoth gray skyscrapers loom over the


MATCH ME, SIDNEY.

A bully with the backbone of a chocolate éclair: John Lithgow as J. J. Hunsecker in "Sweet Smell of Success."

RICHARD MERKIN

stage, turning it into a kind of concrete canyon that resounds with the echo of rumor, and neon brands the night with the names of the clubs. John Guare, who wrote the book, has a clear bead on the material's potent mixture of comic and craven. He brings the lights up on Hunsecker (the expert John Lithgow) as he dictates an item to his secretary. "The sinsational Mae West at Sardi's last night says a gal needs four animals in her life," Lithgow says, reading from scraps of paper. "A mink on her back, a jaguar in her garage, a tiger in her bed, and a jackass to pay for it all." The deft setup clinches both Hunsecker's irresistible charisma and his raffish, vindictive milieu. (It's a barometer of Lithgow's skill that he is able to hide his inveterate decency and intelligence and turn Hunsecker into a memorable bully with the backbone of a chocolate éclair.) "Why do my dreams, my wants, constantly humiliate me?" Guare asked in the introduction to his first major play, "The House of Blue Leaves." Here, from the outset, he stages with crisp authority the unrepentant humiliation of Hunsecker's dreams and those of the low-life press flack Sidney (Brian d'Arcy James, with a big voice but nary a twinkle in his eye), who sticks to him like a pilot fish to a shark.

Unfortunately, the wit of the book is not sustained in Marvin Hamlisch's soft, undistinguished score and Craig Carnelia's flat lyrics. The show dramatizes gossip as the cleats to climb the greasy pole to success—"Gotta get in the column / If you burn for success / Once you're in the column / This whole fickle world'll whisper 'yes,' " the ensemble sings somewhat crudely. But columnists like Hunsecker sowed much more than success in American society. They purveyed an atmosphere of expectation, the illusion of mobility and abundance, and, for the numbed and isolated city-dweller, their revelations manufactured both sensation and a sense of community with the exciting hot center of New York life. The closest that Carnelia's unprobing couplets come to dissecting this phenomenon is in "Dirt," one of the show's best numbers (which, by my lights, should have been positioned earlier in the evening, to give both variety and context to the city's high and low life): "Dirt / It's the reason I read / Dirt / It's an animal need / . . . Got the ink on my fingers / Got the smudge of the smear / Oh my, what dirt / We got here," the chorus whispers. But the lyrics, like the show, can't seem to hold the positive and the negative in the same breath, and what should be a compelling ironic conundrum—Hunsecker is evil, natch, but he is also glamorous, witty, and seductive—becomes grave and one-dimensional. "No shadow is black," Auguste Renoir said. The show seems to forget that corruption may be terrible but it can also be—and in musicals *must* be—thrilling. T-shirts advertising "Sweet Smell of Success" say, "I love this dirty town." The show's problem is that it has the dirt but not the love.

Hytner, who will be the next director of Britain's Royal National Theatre, has had huge hits with the European spectacle "Miss Saigon" and a brilliant revival of "Carousel," but he has never made an American musical. The buoyancy and barbarity of the culture seem to confound him. He stays resolutely on the surface of the story, unable or unwilling to call out more satire from the songs or from Christopher Wheeldon's generic choreography, or to make the America that Hunsecker so corrosively embodies mean more. The show has been in development for four years; what began as a labor of love ends up, sadly, feeling more like a labor.

Whereas "Sweet Smell of Success" is a missed opportunity, "Mr. Goldwyn" (directed by Gene Saks, at the Promenade) is what the Hollywood mogul and legendary maestro of the malaprop might call a nothingburger. The year is 1952. The movies are under siege from television; the industry is under investigation by the House Un-American Activities Committee, and, against all the odds, Goldwyn (Alan King), who at seventy-one is still a force to be reckoned with, is in the midst of pulling into a final cinematic inside straight with "Hans Christian Andersen." But, even in this tempest-tossed time, the writers, Marsha Lebby and John Lollos, manage to hit only still water. As an exercise in hagiography, "Mr. Goldwyn" makes A&E's "Biography" look edgy. The show has no dramatic trajectory, no psychological insight, and no second act. The telltale clue is telephones: there are three, plus two intercoms, so that King can bark Goldwyn's infamous mangled English down the line to disguise the fact that nothing is happening onstage.

With so little to engage the mind, David Gallo has tried to engage the eye with a busy, gargantuan set, designed in what might be called Mahogany Grandiose; it contains mountains of leather-bound volumes that Goldwyn has never read, the busts of classical thinkers whose names he can't pronounce, and a Picasso—evidently a gift from his wife—that he can't stand. The truest things in the show are King's impeccably tailored Savile Row suits, which bespeak both the immigrant's desire for respectability and his wonder at the depth of abundance he has managed to gouge from the world. The Hollywood entrepreneurs—nasty, brutish, and, for the most part, short—were extraordinary for the robustness of their appetites: they were cruel, they were cunning, they were killers. Although the authors here take pains to explain "the Goldwyn touch," they fail to honor the essential quality of those stubby manicured fingers: the blood on them. Goldwyn's effrontery and vulgarity—the elemental boldness that made him a pathfinder and a survivor in the industry—are cut down to bourgeois size. He takes his blood pressure; he jokes about Farley Granger; he politely rolls his credits; and he listens to his dutiful secretary. If this Goldwyn kills, it is with kindness. Alan King, who is always appealing, needs all his transparent expertise to make some of the stale jokes pay off ("Anybody who goes to a psychiatrist should have his head examined"), but his delivery makes the good ones almost worth the wait. "Look at this," he says, noting in the paper that Errol Flynn has shamed the industry yet again by being caught with a teen-age girl. "When God made Errol Flynn, He gave him a brain . . . and a penis . . . and just enough blood to run one at a time." ♦

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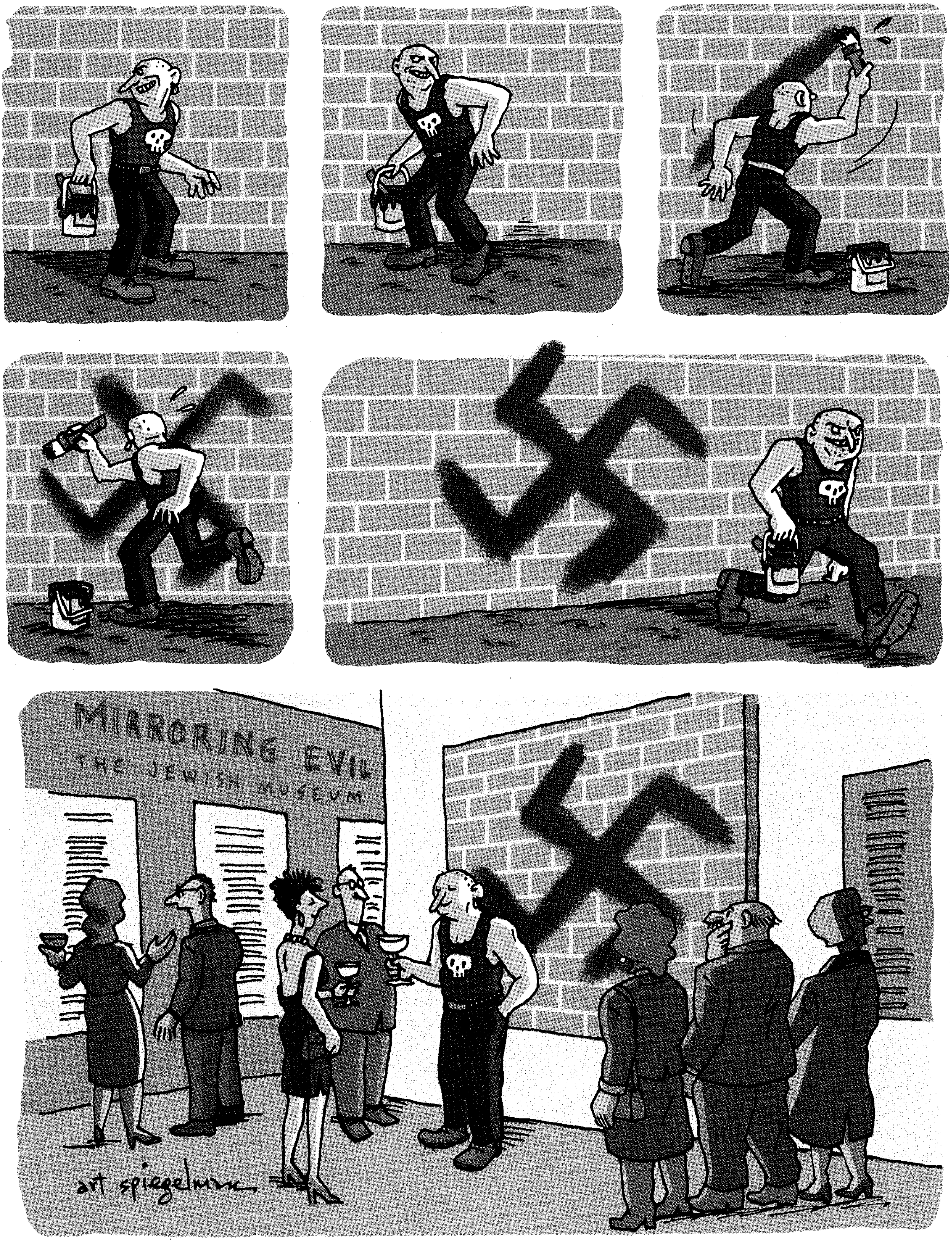
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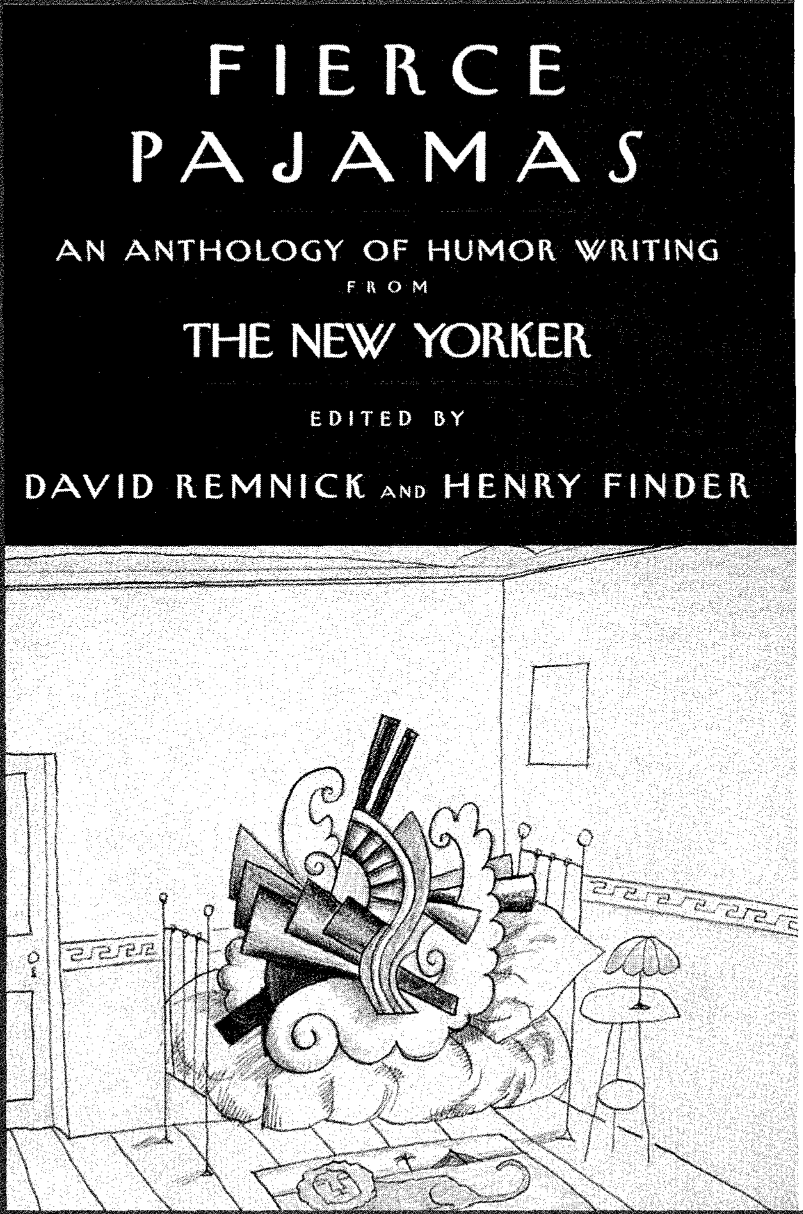

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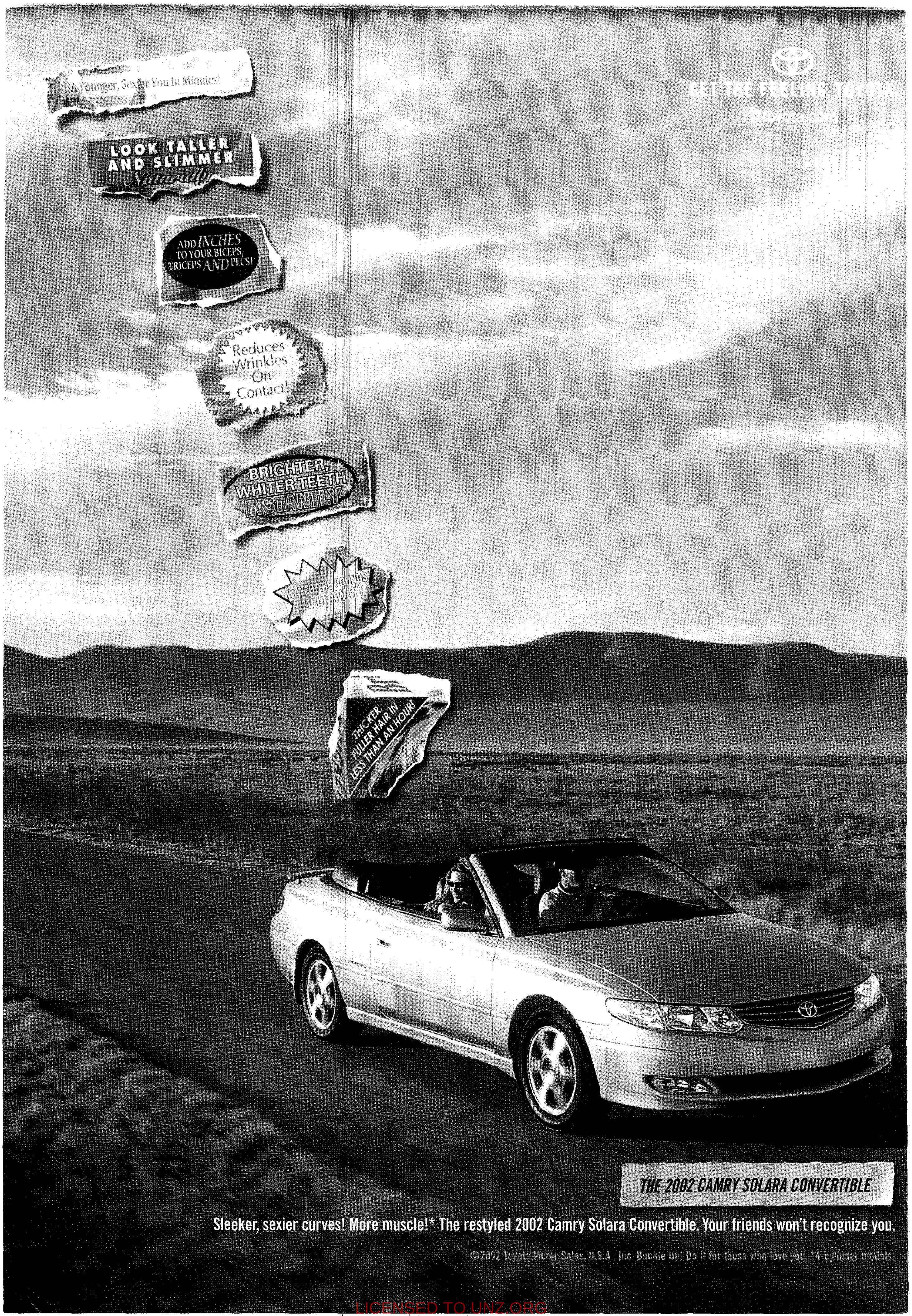
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